BEM!

No.33
50p/$2.00

This short interview, like the one with Lee Marrs last time, took place two years ago in San José; nevertheless, it still deserves to see print here in Bem:

An Interview With CRAIG RUSSELL

Clay Geerdes: How old are you now, Craig?
Craig Russell: 26. Almost 27. I was born on the 13th Anniversary of Orson Welles' "War of the Worlds" broadcast.
CG: Well, that clarifies everything. Did you go to art school?
CR: I went to the University in Cincinnati. I took off and went to New York in January of 1974, but soon after that I returned to Ohio to work with Dan Adkins on some Marvels.
CG: What strain of comics are you coming from?
CR: When I was very small I used to read all of the Carl Barks duck books. I did not know who Carl Barks was, of course, but I knew who the "duck artist" was. I read the Harvey comics, Casper and the rest. Dr Seuss was a heavy influence on me. Then when I was twelve, I was at a friend's house and I saw issue 3 to 14 of the Fantastic Four, and I became a Marvel freak from then on.
CG: When did you first see Star * Reach?
CR: I saw it when it first came out. Mike and I had worked together before that on Ant-Man; I was doing Killraven when he contacted me about doing some work for Star * Reach. I said "No" for the time being, but later I decided to get out of overgrounds and into undergrounds, where I could protect my copyright.
CG: Was it your idea to illustrate Parsifal?
CR: Patrick Mason came around with a prose piece he had adapted from Wagner's opera. Mike had asked me for something, so I showed him my preliminary layouts and he said to go ahead with it.
CG: What of Parsifal is uniquely yours?
CR: This was the first time I had a completed script to work from. Before that I had always had to work from a synopsis and I was always at the mercy of the writer. I always had to second-guess him, how much dialogue he wanted--every time I turned a character's back to the reader, he'd put a word balloon on it. Pat scripted Parsifal and I adapted it page by page, panel by panel. I designed the word balloons into the panels as part of the artwork. I want to be able to interpret a writer as closely as possible and I think the best way to do this is to integrate dialogue into the artwork.
CG: Are you working on something new now? Something original?
CR: Three stories. I'm writing and drawing them and have complete control over the way they'll be published. The first is a book that will be published by Eclipse Enterprises in the format of Gulacy's 'Sabre'. One story I'm working on grew out of a dream of a picture book I was looking at. I see the story as a dream. There are angels with wings. The city at sleep by night. Sea creatures. A fluid, dreamlike atmosphere with the subject matter at opposite ends of the visual treatment. It's called "Somnambula and the City of Sleep". Another story I'm working on has to do with what happens when a person grows up with illusions of space opera science-fiction. He grows up and joins the Exploratory Space Corps, and when he gets into space he finds out there is nothing there but dull routine. This story will have two endings, and the readers will get to write to me and express their opinions about which way it should have gone.
CG: You doing any other overground work?
CR: I might be inking Steve Gerber's "Stewart the Rat" book.
CG: This couldn't be a tale about a talking rat in a world of weird humans, could it?
CR: (smiles)
Mike Friedrich: I'd like to hear more about your reference points in comics and other fields.
CR: In the sixties, there was Jack Kirby and though you can't tell it from my work I can't think of anyone who influenced me more. Steve Ditko's Dr Strange. To me, Ditko was the Dr Strange artist. The Annual I inked was a tribute to him. Learning story-telling I'd have to say Bernie Krigstein and Will Eisner had the most influence, but it's hard to say. When you start naming names, there are always so many people who comes to mind and you always forget to mention some.

Dan Adkins trained me by acting as an editor, going over my work. He acted as a go-between between me and Marvel when I first got started. The way that happened was that my Dad needed some artwork and he was told about this artist who lived about eight miles from us, so he went out there to see him. Later I got the chance to show Adkins some of my work, and he said he could have me working for Marvel within a few months, and he did. The work of Barry Smith really excited me. I was in the office at Marvel when the originals for Conan 17 or 18 came in, and they were the first originals I had seen. They completely floored me. He had extensive notes on the backs of his pages, detailing what he had tried to do with the characters and their motivations.
MF: What about influences outside comics?
CR: In music, I was influenced by Germanic Romanticism, particularly the work of Wagner, his utilization of drama -- the way he used music to amplify the drama served as a model in the same way I believe visuals can be used to amplify the drama. You can learn from ballet and dance. You can learn refinement of gesture from Kabuki or Noh Theatre. We can work from Naturalist-Realist approaches in comics, as Neal Adams did. Or Gil Kane. Nobody looks like his characters, but that's the way they should look sometimes. You can get that one instant of a movement or gesture that says more about what's happening than three dozen pictures explaining it frame by frame.

In 1973, I was at the New York Convention, and I went into a room where Burne Hogarth was giving a slide lecture. He had slides from 1200 up through the 20th Century and he explained how he had used all of this in putting together his Tarzan book. He explained symbolism, visual symbolism. Up to that time, I had had about four years of university art history courses -- and I learned more in that hour about how to look at pictures than I did in those four years. Not so much the who did what when, but how they did it, and why. The way figures are placed in a frame, for instance, reflects what's happening to them. You're familiar with the movie cliché of shooting between someone's legs so that the threatened person appears very small. If the figures were the same size, there would be no threat.
CG: Have you done any other stories lately?
CR: I have one in a book Al Milgrom is going to publish. Berni Wrightson did the cover and a story. Jim Starlin did one. I had become fascinated with the idea of exploring the visual possibilities of one character in a room. I had seen photographs used in comics -- Spanish comics -- and I felt the photography was used as a crutch and I wanted to see it used as a tool rather than a crutch, so I took 130 photographs and built my story around the idea of Hara-kiri.

I'm interested in the graphic novel, and when I feel my anatomy is internalized, I'm going to start on a tetrology based on Wagner.
CG: Are you doing any more work for Marvel?
CR: I just inked Dr Strange over Carmine Infantino.
CG: How do you feel about Marvel's "Work For Hire" contract?
CR: I don't really like it. That's why I don't do any original work for them. Inking or finishing layouts gives me bread and butter money and lets me spend most of my time working on my own projects. Whatever else may be said about Marvel and DC, they pay right away. You might say they pay you off, because that is the last you'll see of your artwork. In the undergrounds, your artwork becomes an investment. I feel I'm making some breakthroughs in ways of telling stories and presenting subject matter. I know what I'm working on, and I want to retain the rights to it. I'm drawn to the undergrounds mainly because I feel I can make a contribution.

BEM is published 5 times a year by the editor from
copyright (c) 1981 by Martin Lock. Bem is printed by Record Printers Ltd, Pump Street, Bromyard, Herefordshire. No part of any issue of Bem may be reprinted, xeroxed or copied without the written permission of Bem's publisher; all rights reserved. By post in the UK or Europe a 6-issue subscription costs £3.00 (cheque or postal order, made payable to M. Lock); a 5-issue subscription by air mail to the USA costs $12.00 (American checks should be payable to Steven R. Johnson, but still sent to Worcester). Single issues cost 50p or $2.50. All comicbook covers and similar art are reproduced for review purposes, and are copyrighted by their respective publishers. No responsibility can be assumed for the return of unsolicited art or manuscripts but, as long as return postage is enclosed, we'll do our best. Ed Sallis, Ruan Lanihorne, & Superswipe are members of the Martin Lock group. Opinions expressed by Bem's contributors, including interviewees etc, do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor. In shops etc Bem should be sold at its cover price -- a wholesale discount of 30% is available from Titan Distributors Ltd, P.O. Box 250, London, E3 4RT. All news items marked "TCR" are (c) 1981 by Street Enterprises, and are reprinted from The Comic Reader with permission. All letters will be considered for publication, including the full address, unless you indicate otherwise. Comments in Reaction identified in "/( )/" are by the editor, unless otherwise indicated. Bem's Australian Agent is George Lee, P.O. Box N346, Grosvenor Street, Sydney NSW 2000, Australia; a 5-issue airmail subscription to Australia costs A$13.00, payable to George Lee. A full-page advertisement, proportional to A3 or A4, costs £17. An area 175mm wide by 247mm high, which will be reduced for printing to 125mm by 176mm, costs £10. Contributors are sent a complimentary copy of the issue their letter, art etc appears in--or if you subscribe, your subscription is extended by an issue. Back issues: all 17 issues still available can be yours for £6.00, post free. Any recent six (from Bem-24 on) can be had for £2, or eight for £2.75, or nine for £3. This is an amateur, non profit-making magazine. Editor & Publisher: Martin Lock. Assistant Editor: Mike Taylor. BEM-33 -- APRIL 1981

THE BEM NEWS SERVICE

Gene Colan has left Marvel -- in fact, he was granted an early release from his contract, early by several weeks. He has now signed with DC. His replacement on THE AVENGERS has not yet been decided--they'll be using fill-in artists for the time being. Jim Shooter, who takes over the scripting with #211, will be bringing in a new line-up of Avengers, which will mean the departure of The Vision, Wonder Man, Jocasta, The Beast, and The Scarlet Witch. At this time, though, none of these heroes have signed with DC. The Hulk, an original Avenger, should return to the team, so some of the discarded heroes may well join The Defenders; the Silver Surfer may also join up.

©1981 MARVEL COMICS GROUP

Lynn Graeme has been fired; Jo Duffy and Danny Fingeroth are also giving up their editorial positions, while coming in is Tom DeFalco. There are numerous changes, to try and get each character handled by only one editor, including the team books and also the reprints; with five editors, here's the state of play:

Jim Salicrup: AVENGERS, FANTASTIC FOUR, CAPTAIN AMERICA, IRON MAN, MARVEL SUPER ACTION, THOR, TWO-IN-ONE, and SPIDEY.

Denny O'Neil: BIZARRE ADVENTURES, MOON KNIGHT, DAREDEVIL, POWER MAN & IRON FIST, MASTER OF KUNG FU, and SPIDER-WOMAN.

Al Milgrom: DEFENDERS, DR STRANGE, ROM, HULK, SHE-HULK, MARVEL SUPER-HEROES, and STAR TREK.

Louise Jones: DAZZLER, KA-ZAR, X-MEN, STAR WARS, CONAN, KING CONAN, and SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN.

Tom DeFalco: SPIDER-MAN, MARVEL TALES, MARVEL TEAM-UP, SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN, GHOST RIDER, MICRONAUTS, WHAT IF, and SERGEANT FURY. -TCR/M

The Scarlet Witch, plus husband, is to star in a Bill Mantlo-scripted four-part mini-series; The Beast is likely to go back to THE X-MEN. -TCR/M

Gil Kane has done a Conan job for SAVAGE SWORD, and is contemplating more work--possibly fill-ins.

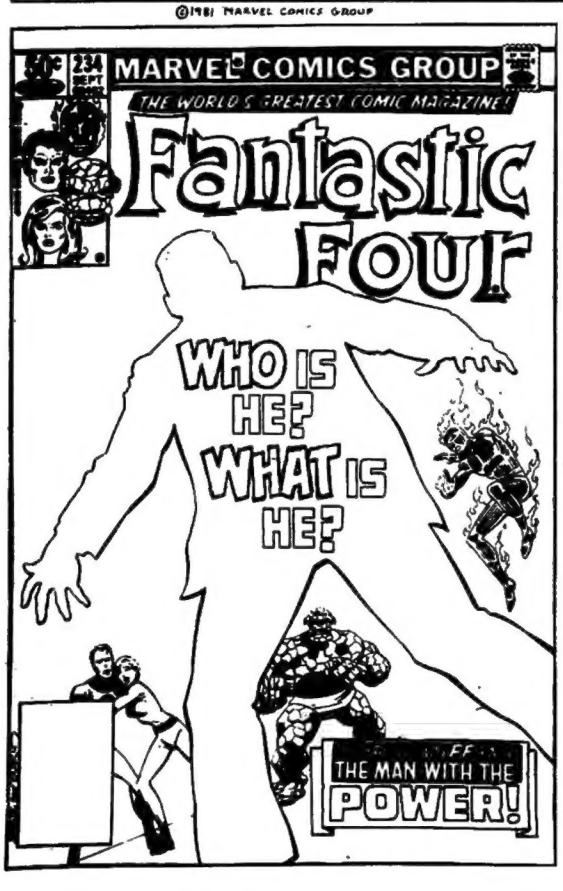
BIZARRE ADVENTURES #27 is an all-horror issue; #28 will feature the Red Sonja story written by Chris Claremont and drawn by English artist John Bolton. -TCR

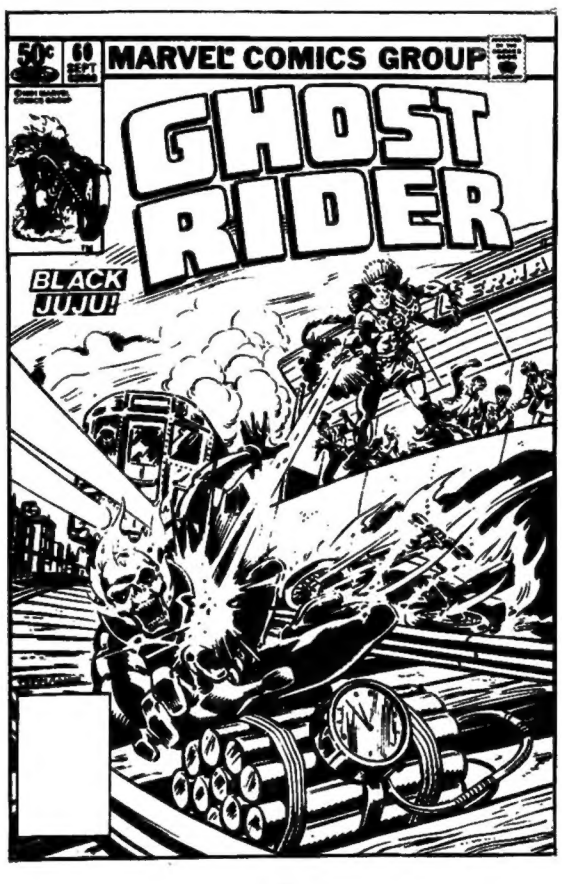
The reprints of British Hulk stories in MARVEL SUPER ACTION end with #34; due to the cut in story pages from 22 to 21, it will be replaced by a couple of new pin-up pages, "The Avengers Hall of Fame".

Besides DEFENDERS #100, X-MEN #150 is an October-dated double-length issue. The former co-stars a huge number of past and present Defenders, including the Silver Surfer; the latter recounts the X-Men's ultimate showdown with Magneto, by, of course, Chris Claremont, Dave Cockrum, and Josef Rubinstein.

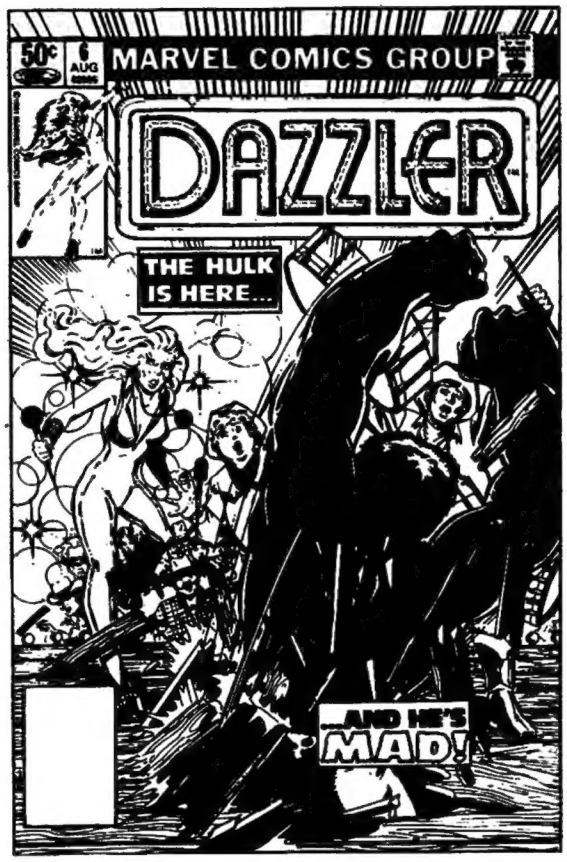
©1981 MARVEL COMICS GROUP

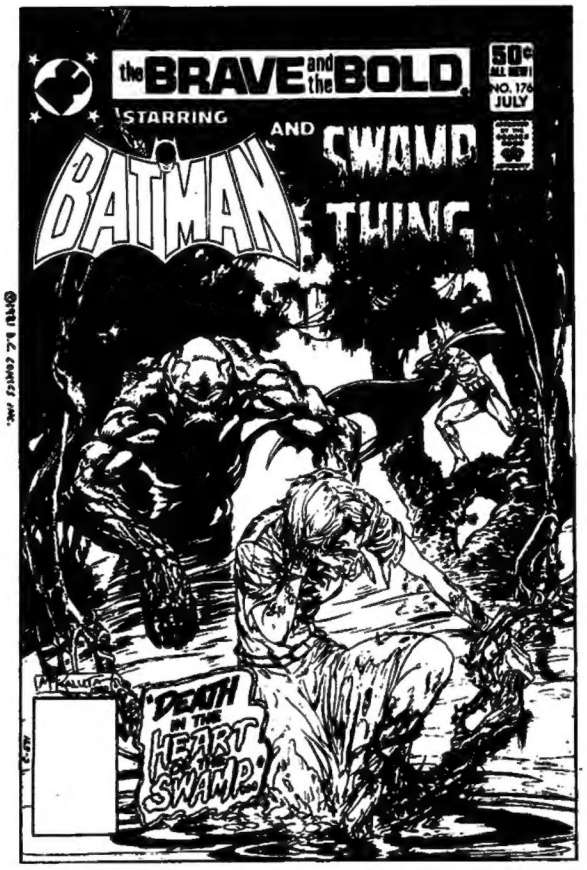
A bit more madness than usual reigns at Marvel, as deadlines have been moved up as much as two months in an effort to get the company on schedule for the first time in over a decade. Expect a lot of fill-in issues. Vince Colletta, who has not been under contract to DC for quite some time, is doing quite a bit of inking, including John Byrne's one-and-only SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN job (#58) cover-dated September). John will be concentrating all his energies on writing, pencilling & inking THE FANTASTIC FOUR; he <u>was</u> several weeks ahead on the book, but now with the deadline push-up coming at the same time as the FF 20th anniversary story, he finds himself several months behind -- all this without missing a single deadline! He'll have finished pencilling the story by the time you read this, and have moved on to inking it. John has just signed a new one-year contract. His old inking mate, Terry Austin (who did John's first two or three FFs) is now inking Marshall Rogers on DOCTOR STRANGE. Rogers is only committed to six issues of the character, and is also doing a lot of work for Eclipse's new magazine.





©1981 MARVEL COMICS GROUP





The current line-up of Marvel annuals for 1981 stands like this:

CAPTAIN AMERICA ≠5: David Michelinie, Gene Colan (?) & Dave Simons.

AVENGERS ≠10: Chris Claremont, Michael Golden & Terry Austin, guest-starring The X-Men, introducing an interesting new villainess called the Rogue, and answering the question of whatever happened to Ms Marvel!

FANTASTIC FOUR ≠16: Ed Hannigan & Steve Ditko present "The Coming of Dragonlord", also featuring Dragon Man.

MARVEL TEAM-UP ≠4: Written by Frank Miller, and drawn by Herb Trimpe and Mike Esposito. Co-starring Spider-Man, Moon Knight, Daredevil, Power Man, & Iron Fist versus the Kingpin and the Purple Man.

MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE ≠6: Doug Moench, Ron Wilson, Gene Day, and Klaw, versus the Thing, Ka-Zar, Wyatt Wingfoor, and, as promised years ago in FOOM, The American Eagle.

CONAN ≠6: Art by Gil Kane.

X-MEN ≠5: Chris Claremont, Brent Anderson, and Bob McLeod present "Ooh La La Badoon", co-starring the Fantastic Four and Arkon.

Those seven are the annuals scheduled so far; also expected are HULK ≠10, SPIDER-MAN ≠15, and PETER PARKER ≠3, details of which were in our last instalment, in Masters Of Infinity ≠7.

Though they were quite certain a few months ago, the series based on upcoming movies may be restricted to the mini-series format. The adaptation of the Lucas and Spielberg film RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK will run 64 pages and be published, besides the MARVEL SUPER SPECIAL format all these films will appear in, as three regular-sized issues, a paperback, and a treasury edition (if a sponsor can be found; the EMPIRE STRIKES BACK treasury was sponsored by Parkes Run, a colouring book publisher). The James Bond film, FOR YOUR EYES ONLY, will be 48 pages with 16 pages of text and photos; it'll come out as two regular-sized comics, a paperback, and a treasury. They are now vacillating on the prospects of a JAMES BOND comic book as a regular series. And Paramount-Disney's DRAGONSLAYER will appear only as a Super Special, with 48 pages of story and 16 pages of text and art. All non-regular-size comic versions (special, treasury, paperback) will be priced the same: $2.50. -TCR

--However, all three titles are listed as 50 cent comics on Marvel's latest news sheet. FOR YOUR EYES ONLY is scripted by Denny O'Neil and pencilled by Howard Chaykin, not Frank Miller; DRAGONSLAYER is scripted by O'Neil, pencilled by Marie Severin, and inked by Severin and John Tartaglione; and RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, which premieres a month earlier with a September cover-date, is scripted by Walt Simonson, and drawn by John Buscema and Klaus Janson.

Some new MARVEL SUPER SPECIAL movie projects have been mentioned. Marvel wants to adapt ROCKY, ROCKY II and ROCKY III, and hope to do the first two and have them out well before the third part of the saga appears in the theatres. Also, despite the nixing of his previous film (JABBERWOCKY), Marvel is planning to go ahead with an adaptation of Terry Gilliam's THE TIME BANDITS, the medieval craziness produced by George Harrison and starring Michael Palin, Sean Connery, and John Cleese, among others. -TCR

MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE ≠80 guest-stars Ghost Rider; MICRONAUTS ≠34 dittoes Dr Strange.

Al Brodax, the man behind the cartoon "Yellow Submarine", is now Vice President in charge of development and special projects for Marvel Entertainment.

The new Roy Thomas-created DC sword and sorcery comic has had a last-minute change of title: it is ARAK, SON OF THUNDER which is previewed in the August issue (≠48) of WARLORD, pencilled by Ernie Colon & inked by Tony DeZuniga; ARAK ≠1 comes out the following month, as does ALL-STAR SQUADRON ≠1, after its preview in JLA ≠193, drawn by Rich Buckler.

In our last (MoI ≠7) instalment, we gave full details of the changes in DC's team caused by Sol Harrison's retirement and Cary Burkett's resignation as an editor after less than two months. Jenette Kahn is now Publisher and President; Joe Orlando is Vice President and Editorial Director, responsible for DC's creative efforts in all areas (and Vice President & Secretary of the Comics Magazine Association of America, with Marvel's James Galton taking over from Sol Harrison as President); Paul Levitz is Manager of Business Affairs, with responsibility for all circulation, foreign sales, and licensing business affairs; and Karen Berger is Editorial Coordinator. The new post of head of Sales Promotion goes to Roger Slifer, who will concentrate on the direct sales market, and also handle fan press liaison, instead of Andy Helfer, who'll continue as Joe Orlando's assistant. Cary Burkett's replacement as editor and Dick Giordano's assistant is Dave Manak.

All DC comics are now monthly, as of the August cover-dates; the extra issues of WORLD'S FINEST give room for Plastic Man and a new Zatanna series, probably rotating with Red Tornado. WF ≠271 will feature a 48-page Superman/Batman story to celebrate the 200th anniversary of their first comics team-up in WF ≠71. It's by Roy Thomas, Rich Buckler & Frank McLaughlin, and ties the four different recountings of the first meeting of the two heroes together. -TCR/M

Roy Thomas is scripting the FORTRESS OF SOLITUDE tabloid, which will be drawn by Ross Andru and Romeo Tanghal. -TCR

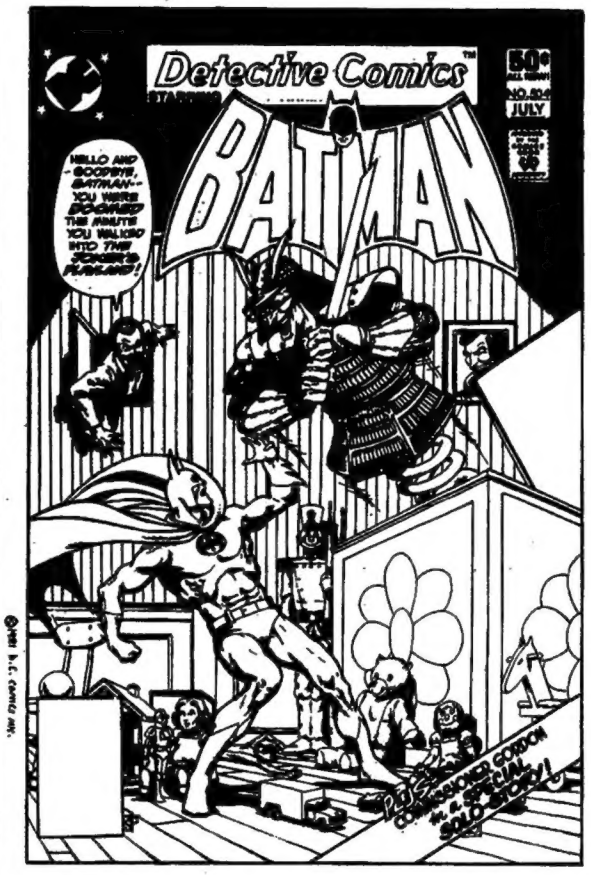
Roy Thomas's first full issue of LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES is ≠279, after scripting ≠278 over Gerry Conway's plot. Superboy will be returning to the book as a semi-regular member.

George Perez is now the regular cover artist for ADVENTURE COMICS PRESENTS DIAL "H" FOR HERO beginning with ≠484, the first issue edited by Len Wein. -TCR

Jerry Ordway has as his first regular assignment for DC the inking of Rich Buckler's pencils for ALL-STAR SQUADRON. -TCR

THE NEW TEEN TITANS will soon feature a search for the killers of The Doom Patrol.

THE WORLD'S GREATEST SUPER-HEROES!
50¢
NO. 192
JULY
JUSTICE LEAGUE of AMERICA
LEARN THE ASTONISHING TRUE ORIGIN OF THE RED TORNADO!
BUT WE'RE WARNING YOU HIS SECRET IS A REAL KILLER!


Detective Comics
STARRING
BATMAN
50¢
JULY
HELLO AND GOODBYE, BATMAN... YOU WERE DOOMED THE MINUTE YOU WALKED INTO THIS JOKER'S PLAYLAND!
COMMISSIONER GORDON in A SPECIAL SOLO STORY!

Gene Colan has signed a contract with DC --he's started off working from a Batman script, and his pencils will be inked by Bob Smith. There's no real word yet on exactly which assignments Colan will be taking on regularly, although there is talk of a new title. The fact that Marv Wolfman is also under contract to DC, and that the name and character of Dracula are in the public domain, has not escaped notice.

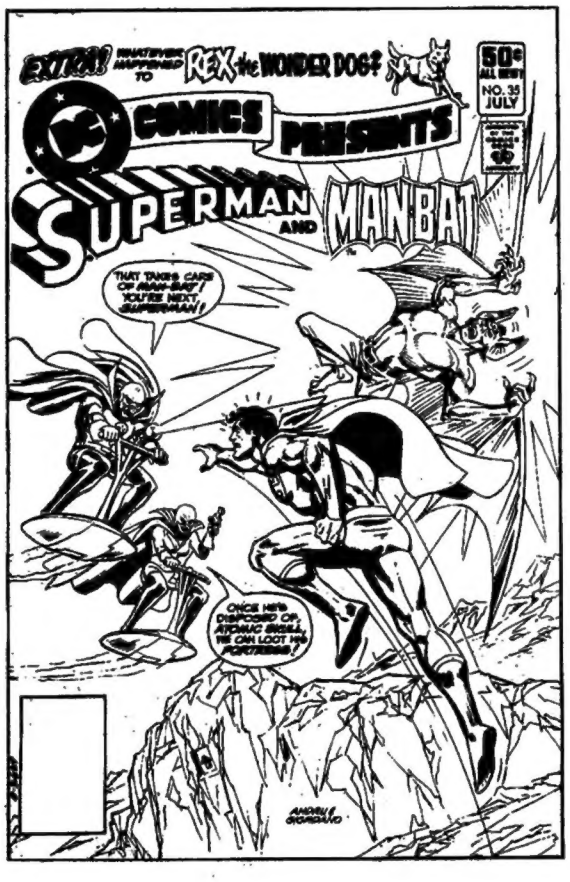
Steve Gerber has resurfaced, and will be scripting the three-part PHANTOM ZONE mini-series for release this summer. (He could hardly work for Marvel at present, as he's involved in legal action against Marvel for their alleged "infringement of equitable copyright" concerning Howard the Duck--see The Comics Journal #62 for details.) No artist has been set, but Rich Buckler has been mentioned.

The Neal Adams monthly comic book deal mentioned in Bem-32 is still in negotiation --it might be tied up very soon now. And a major change in Wonder Woman's costume is likely; unlike Batman's bat-symbol, and Superman's S, her present costume lacks any sort of trademark-able design that can be easily used in merchandising.

Aardvark-Vanaheim Press, publishers of CEREBUS THE AARDVARK and SWORDS OF CEREBUS, are intending to publish a stripzine this year entitled OUT OF THE DEPTHS to showcase promising comics writers and artists and to act as a training ground for a new anthology title currently in the planning stages as a companion title to CEREBUS.

They are interested in looking at 5 to 8 page stories (written, pencilled, inked & lettered), preferably with a twist ending. Any genre except super-heroes. Minimal page rates of about $10 for completely finished work, ready for printing--they do however guarantee to pay for work chosen within 30 days of acceptance. Send xeroxes only, please, as samples submitted cannot be returned. All contributors retain exclusive copyright to their own work; all artwork must be proportional to 5½ by 8½. The address is Aardvark-Vanaheim Press, P.O. Box 1674 Stn. "C", Kitchener, Ontario, Canada N2G 4R2.

CEREBUS #25 is out in April, #26 in May; SWORDS OF CEREBUS #2 is due out on June 1, and contains a new story, pencilled by Dave Sim (of course) and inked by Josef Rubinstein. This story has no dialogue...


EXTRA! WHATEVER HAPPENED TO REX the WONDER DOG?
COMICS PRESENTS
50¢
NO. 35
JULY
SUPERMAN AND MANBAT
THAT TAKES CARE OF MAN-BAT! YOU'RE NEXT, SUPERMAN!
ONCE HE'S DISPOSED OF ARTHUR BRILL, HE CAN LOOT HIS PORTFOLIO!
ANDRU GIORDANO

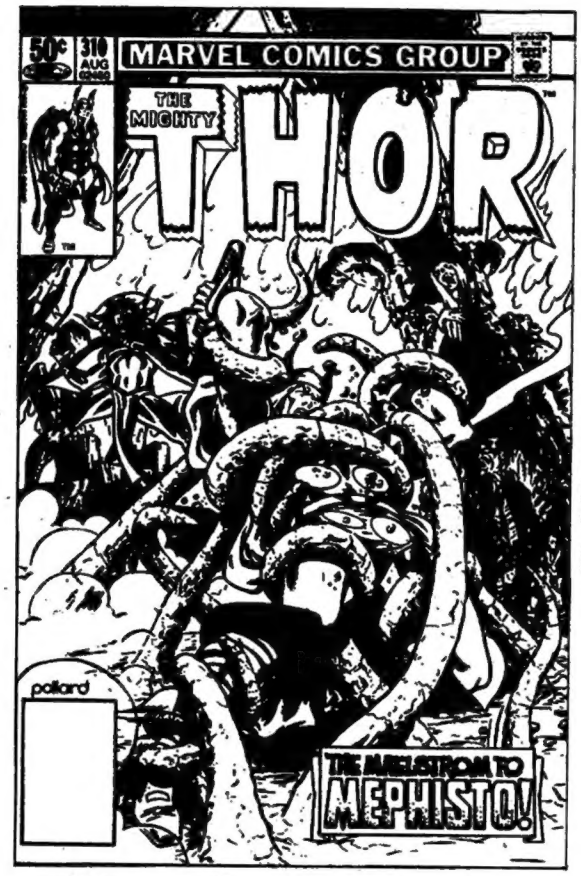
The first issue of New Media's ADVENTURE ILLUSTRATED is due out now, with a colour cover painted by Paul Gulacy, the start of an sf serial by Doug Moench & Bill Sienkiewicz, a western series by editor Peter Gillis & Alan Weiss, and a non-series story by Moench and Gulacy. Details on FANTASY ILLUSTRATED, its companion magazine due out in April or May, are less final. The cover is by Craig Russell; Don McGregor is doing a series about Alexander Risk, a Hodiah Twist-type detective who thinks that he's Sherlock Holmes. No artist is set yet, but Tom Sutton seems a likely choice.

Fictioneer Books have now issued a new book by Don McGregor, THE VARIABLE SYNDROME --besides the title novella, this 144 page, trade paperback (8½" x 5½") size book has "Inside Detectives Inc", a lengthy behind the scenes look at the production of the recent book, including original script pages and reproductions of early stages of the Marshall Rogers artwork. The cover is by Walt Simonson, the price $10.

The bi-monthly ECLIPSE magazine, from Eclipse Enterprises, will have 52 pages. Issue 1 has a Paul Gulacy cover, and has the full 19-page Superman/Creeper team-up that Steve Englehart withdrew from DC in a dispute over page rates. Changes have been made, and artist Marshall Rogers has changed The Creeper into "Klonsbon the Foozle", while both Clark Kent and Jack Ryder have become women. A 10-page silent strip in pencil by Craig Russell, originally issued as a portfolio 5 years ago, is also featured, plus a 6-page short story by Jim Starlin, the first 8-page instalment of "Ms Tree", a female private eye series by Max Allan Collins and Terry Beatty, and work by Howard Cruse, Marc Hempel, and Trina Robbins.

The two Madame Xanadu stories that Steve Englehart also withdrew from DC have been reworked, and 10 more pages added, to make a 60-page story, again drawn by Marshall Rogers; it will run as six 10-page instalments, starting in ECLIPSE #2. Also in that issue is the first of eight 4-page instalments of Sax Rohmer's 1902 novel "Dope", adapted by Trina Robbins, the first of a series called "Ragamuffins" by McGregor, and a funny animal story by Steve Leialoha. Englehart is writing two new 60-page tales, each of which spotlights a new character; they'll be serialized after his first serial concludes, running up to ECLIPSE #19.

Ken Pierce is publishing a series of MODESTY BLAISE strip reprint volumes; "Top Traitor" and "The Vikings" are in #1.



2000AD prog 208 is the fourth anniversary issue; it contains the first half of a Tharg story by Alan Grant and Q. Twerk, in which The Mighty One's arch-enemies, the Dictators of Zrag, unleash a horde of 2000AD villains. There's a 2-page birthday quiz, the start of a 4-week "Space Invaders" competition, a front cover by Redondo for "Return to Armageddon", a back cover pin-up of Ro-Jaws by Kevin O'Neill, a complete Judge Dredd tale, "The Problem With the Sonny Bono Block", by Grover and Emberton, and a Future Shock by Steve Moore and Eric Bradbury.

Prog 209 has a wrap-around SF cover by Ian Gibson. A new occasional Judge Dredd series, "The Mega-Rackets", begins with "The Body Sharks" -- they run pawn shops that really want their pound of flesh! The script of this two-parter is written by T.B. Grover, while the art is by a new addition to the ranks of regular Dredd artists. With his first work for the weekly --welcome, please, Colin Wilson. The Future Shock is by Alan Moore & Mike White, with the return of Snazz from "Think Inc"-- remember robot cops leading to robot robbers, leading to robot innocent bystanders?

Prog 210 features the return of "Portrait of a Mutant" with Johnny Alpha, after the short break caused by Carlos Ezquerra's move to Spain; that's part 8 of the story. The cover is of Judge Dredd, by Brian Bolland, and ties in with the conclusion of "The Body Sharks" inside. On the Future Shock front, the creative team is Kelvin Gosnell & Ian Kennedy; the back cover pin-up is of "Mean Arena" by Steve Dillon, and is a sneak preview of the new look for the series. When it returns, the scripting will be by Tom Tully as before, with the art alternating between Steve Dillon and Eric Bradbury.

And prog 211 has a free gift--one of the "Panini" albums, plus a packet of stickers. There'll be a second packet the following week, and after that you'll be able to buy further Panini packets in newsagents etc. The subject of the album? Buck Rogers!

A second "Mega-Rackets" 2-parter begins for Judge Dredd, by T.B. Grover and Ron Smith: "Perp Running". As I'm sure you're aware, perps are perpetrators of illegal acts. The back cover pin-up is of Stone & Liana from "Meltdown Man", by Dave Gibbons; the Future Shock is by Gary Rice and Mike White.

Prog 212 has a Strontium Dog cover by Ezquerra; the Future Shock is by Gosnell & Bradbury, and the back cover pin-up stars Max Normal, by Brett Ewins. And the current regular strips continue: "Strontium Dog", "Meltdown Man", "Judge Dredd", "Return to Armageddon", and the Future Shocks.

The 1981 Sci-Fi Special is out in April, with 64 pages for 45p. It has a painted cover by Brian Bolland, colour features on the space shuttle and Superman II, a new Judge Dredd story by T.B. Grover & Colin Wilson, a new Nemesis episode by Pat Mills and Kevin O'Neill, a photo-story telling of Tharg's attempts to register here as an alien, a feature on the best-selling Top Ten SF authors, a potted history of 2000AD, features, book reviews, puzzles, and a John Wagner-scripted "One-Eyed Jack" reprint. This VALIANT character was in many ways a forerunner of Judge Dredd.

In early summer, a number of new strips will come into 2000AD. The new Stainless Steel Rat serial, scripted by Kelvin Gosnell for Carlos Ezquerra to draw, will be replacing Strontium Dog; Gerry Finley-Day and Dave Gibbons are joining forces on a new future war series; Pat Mills has just created a new sword & savagery barbarian character/series, but the artist isn't set yet; Alan Grant and Massimo Belardinelli are working on a series too. And of course Nemesis is still coming along...

The intention is not to start three new strips at the same time, but to phase in the new strips one by one.

Apologies for the lack of 2000AD cover reproductions this time--this has been due to a slight Thrill-Sucker infestation, but the situation is now under control and the covers will be back next time.

There was a full listing of the Marvel Britain newcomers, amalgamations, and price rises in our last instalment, along with news of the Summer Specials.

DR WHO MONTHLY #51 is a special farewell to Tom Baker issue, including an overview of the just-concluded season, an interview with John Nathan-Turner, a star profile on Tom Baker and a photo feature on his many companions, Dr Who in "War of the Words" by Steve Moore & Dave Gibbons, and more.

DR WHO MONTHLY #52 is a special issue devoted to Jon Pertwee. The star profile is on Katy Manning, while Barry Letts is interviewed, and the photo-file is on Anthony Ainley (the new Master). There's an overview of the Pertwee action/adventure years, while the archive story spotlighted is "The Time Monster", and the main Dr Who comic strip is "Spider-God". There's also part three of the Dr Who episode guide, and the usual features.

STARBURST is planning to double the number of colour pages in the magazine without raising the cover price. Also, Paul Neary is working on a new science fiction comic strip. It will be in full colour, and is tentatively scheduled for issue 35, which will be the first issue with the increase in the number of colour pages.

STARBURST #33 (May) has interviews by John Fleming with Hammer makeup man Roy Ashton and model builder Martin Bower; a full-colour article on the making of Walt Disney's "Snow White"; and Phil Edwards on "The Making of Altered States".

STARBURST #34's interviews are with the former Dr Who scripter Terrance Dicks, by John Fleming, and Margot Kidder, by Mike Munn. There's a feature on the making of 2001: A Space Odyssey by Phil Edwards, as well as part three of his "Frankenstein Chronicles", which spotlights "The Son of Frankenstein".

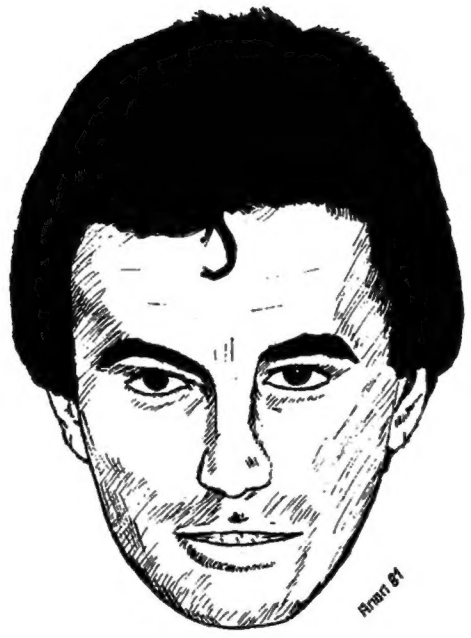
The April 4th-dated issues of WHOOPEE, BUSTER, JACKPOT, JINTY, TAMMY, WHIZZER & CHIPS, and TWINKLE are up from 12p to 14p. The following week, D.C. Thomson's NUTTY, BEEZER and TOPPER go from 10p to 12p. And a week later, TV COMIC goes up to 15p.

DOCTOR WHO in
WAR OF THE WORDS
BBC RADIO ONE
THE LATEST TRAFFIC
NEWS
THE SPACE-LANES AROUND THE PLANET BELOGIE ARE STILL BLOCKED IN ALL DIRECTIONS...
OOPS!
STEVE MOORE / ARTIST: DAVE GIBBONS / EDITOR: ALAN MACKENZIE

THE BEM INTERVIEW:

Dave Gibbons

conducted by Mike Taylor



Dave Gibbons was born on the fourteenth of April, 1949 in London. In the comparatively small number of years he has been working in comics, he has become one of the most respected and popular British comics artist, recently winning an award as such from the Society of Strip Illustrators, despite formidable competition.

Dave is certainly one of the most professional comics people I've met - he has the self-discipline and drive to turn out his work at a consistent rate - so much so that he has never missed a deadline at all - and yet this is allied with an exuberent enthusiasm for the comics medium that is stimulating to behold.

-Mike Taylor.

MT: How did you get involved in comics?
DG: Well, it's a long story, but I suppose it would really go back to the first Super-Man comic I ever got, when I was about seven. My grand-dad bought it for me from Woolworths. I copied pictures out of that very issue, and I used to get Superman annuals every Christmas, and make up my own superheroes. I used to buy THE EAGLE as well.

Then in about 1962 or 3, there was a letter in THE EAGLE from a bloke in South Africa, who said that if anyone was interested in reading a magazine about comics they should send him a postal order. So I did, and I got back the magazine, a South African fanzine, called "The Komix". He also wrote me a nice letter saying that there was somebody else in England who had replied by the name of John Hudson, and suggesting that I get in touch with him. So I did, we used to correspond quite regularly, and swap each other comics. He used to draw as well, and we made up our own characters. I eventually drifted away from this sort of fan activity, I suppose when I was about sixteen or so, when I went to college to study to be a surveyor, and other things took over.

I wasn't too happy with the career I was pursuing, and comics seemed like a really good thing to get back into, when I bought a magazine called CYCLOPS (which was the first British comics newspaper) containing an advertisement for a shop called DARK THEY WERE AND GOLDEN EYED. I promptly sought out DIWAGE, where I got the first Dez Skinn issue of FANTASY ADVERTISER. In it, amongst other things, there were advertisements for fanzines that happened to say "with artwork by professional artist John Hudson". I thought "well! John's made it, he's in comics. I'll have to get in touch with him'. So I did, and I showed him some of the drawings that I'd done very recently (I used to doodle on the blotter at work) and he advised me to go along and see Dez Skinn, "who works in comics professionally and who also puts out a fanzine, and he might let you do something in there". So that was really my first contact with professional comics, going on John Hudson's advice and meeting Dez Skinn.
MT: When did you first realise that you could perhaps break into pro comics?
DG: What really made me think that I could draw comics was that I bought the issue of AGENT OF SHIELD drawn by Barry Smith. Now I'd always thought that American comics were drawn by Americans, by people like Infantino, Kirby, these sort of gangsters in New York. I didn't think that it was in the realms of possibility that anybody from England could ever make it. But I looked at this Barry Smith comic and thought "well, he's from England, and I can do better than that. So why can't I make it?". And in fact one of the first things I did, which was among the things that I took to show Dez, was a complete re-drawing of each page of that AGENT OF SHIELD comic. Looking back on it, it was probably worse than Barry...well, it was definitely worse than what Barry Smith had done. I believe that Barry Smith actually saw my version of it, and I think he was, not offended, but he thought it was a bit of a cheek, which it probably was.
MT: Then you went to see Dez.

DG; Yes. Dez was very professional and he told me to leave my portfolio, go away and come back, which I did. The first work that I ever actually had in print was some headings for FANTASY ADVERTISER, for Battlefield, and the different columns he used to run in there.

Eventually he got me a bit of professional work, which was a page of lettering for 'COR!!'. It was abysmal (laughter). There were questions asked about who did this horrible lettering, but anyway, I got £2.50 for it!

Then I plodded on a bit more, I was now doing a thing in FANTASY ADVERTISER called 'Quest AD 2130' which an art agent saw. He thought it was quite good and said he might be able to get some work for me, see - this is all leading to a point, (laughter). Having completed my studies as a surveyor, I had a little time off, a nice holiday, and when I came back I thought 'right, this is where I break into comics professionally, this is where I do it.' So I went along to the art agent and he got me a job drawing a pocket library. This particular script I was given was called "The Dead are Awake and Walking" and consisted of girls in their night wear and corpses rising from the grave. The girl ran down the street in her night-dress being chased by the corpses about four times in the course of the book, so it wasn't a particularly well-written story. But the amazing, unbelievable coincidence was that the main male character in the story was called John Hudson, without whom etc. etc.

So that was my first professional job.
MT; How did that lead on to 2000AD?

DG; Well that's another long story! (laughter) After I'd done this pocket library thing, which was really disastrous since it took me a long time to do, I didn't exactly distinguish myself on it, and I didn't make any profit on it at all after I'd paid back everything I borrowed from my mum, I decided I'd better go back to being a surveyor.

I was still doing bits for fanzines, and I was doing some things for underground comics because I'd met Felix Dennis and he gave me some work doing that for very, very small amounts of money. I was also doing joke pages and lettering, including 'anglicising' the spelling in the first thirty or so issues of Mighty World of Marvel. Dez phoned me up one day and told me that the artist who was drawing the 'Zarga' strip in The Buster was going on holiday, and if I was in the right place at the right time, with a sample of Zarga, I might fill in for a few weeks. So I did a sample for Zarga and it was approved by the editor. I drew six episodes of Zarga, Man of Mystery in The Buster. I was working in the daytime as well at my other job, and this gave me enough money that I thought "well if I'm going to do it, this is when I do it.'

Fortunately, the art agent who got this other work for me got me some work with Thompson, a strip called The Wriggling Wrecker, and I just progressed from there.
MT; How long did you work for Thompson?
DG; For about three years, doing various strips, The Wriggling Wrecker, as I've said, The Shark Men, The Flying Tripehound (laughter), which was a World War 2 thing about a spotter pilot. I did some fill-ins on Nick Jolly, usually drawn by Ron Smith, which was about a highwayman with a flying horse, and also The Scarlet Hawk.

Towards the end of the Thompson stuff, someone approached my agent with the idea of doing a comic for Nigeria, which was to be called Powerman. Apparently, the only comics that were on sale in Nigeria were English comics, and it was considered a bit incongruous that black children should be reading about blond-haired cricket captains. So they decided to bring out a comic which had Powerman, who's virtually a black Superman, Jango, which was a story about an escaped slave who became a sheriff, and a war story, which incidentally was drawn by Carlos Ezquerra.

I designed the character, and Brian Bolland and I used to draw it in alternate issues. It came out fortnightly, so once a month we'd each draw 14 pages of Powerman. That continued for about 20 issues.

About when 2000AD was starting up - they had been having a lot of trouble with the Harlem Heroes. Two or three artists had had a go at drawing it, and none had quite

WE SEEM TO BE CAUGHT IN A MATRIX OF INTEGRATED IMAGES ...AS IF THE FLOW OF TIME HAD BECOME ***CRYSTALLISED*** INTO STATIC YET SEQUENTIAL SCENES...

AND I'VE GOT THE FEELING THAT WE'RE BEING CLOSELY ***SCRUTINISED...***

WHA..?

WORDS! MATERIALISING OUT OF THE AIR...

THEY REMIND ME OF THE FLOATING PHYLACTERIES OF FUMETTI FOUR...

WE'D BETTER LOOK OUTSIDE!

WHOOPS! I WONDER WHO DREW ALL THIS? COULD IT BE..?

AFFIRMATIVE, MASTER...

DAVE GIBBONS

DR WHO ©1981 BBC. OTHER CHARACTERS ©1981 IPC MAGAZINES LTD

managed to get what they wanted, drawing them in very old-fashioned costumes and everything. They'd seen Powerman, which showed that I could draw black people, and people flying through the air, so they asked me if I would like to design a Harlem Heroes costume, which I did, and which as you probably know is like the Harlem Globetrotters. They were pleased with that, and they started me off drawing The Harlem Heroes.

An interesting thing is that the first Harlem Heroes story that I drew in fact wasn't used until about issue 20 of the magazine, when I was going on holiday myself, and they adapted it to fit into the storyline that was running. But I think 2000AD was a marvellous break. It came along at the right time for me, and obviously IPC paid much better than Thompson or Powerman did. It was just at the time I was getting married, so it worked out very nicely.

In fact, the first I ever knew of 2000AD made me green with envy because I bumped into Mick McMahon, who lives in the same town as me, with the pencils of his first Judge Dredd story under his arm, and I thought "well, this is the sort of comic I want to be involved in". But fortunately, only a few days later, I was involved. So that's how I got to 2000AD.

MT; Did you enjoy the sporting atmosphere in Harlem Heroes?

DG: Well, I don't like sports. I used to hate it at school, and I don't follow any sort of sports at all, but I found it was an easy thing to draw because there was plenty of action, and action is a much easier thing to draw than inaction. I used to get quite a lot of enjoyment out of arranging the page so you could see the play progressing logically through-out and keep the action flowing smoothly from one picture to the next. One of the best things about Harlem Heroes was the introduction of Artie Gruber, which made a big hit with the kids. In fact I understand that when Artie Gruber first appeared, Harlem Heroes temporarily went to No. 1 in the paper. I certainly used to enjoy drawing his ugly mug. It was an enjoyable strip to do.

MT; How did you come to take over from Belardinelli on Dan Dare?

DG; Well, on the face of it, Dan Dare should have been the most popular strip in the paper from the very beginning, because he was an established character, kids possibly heard their dad talk about him, he had full colour in the middle pages, he had mind-boggling adventures, you know, spaceships and really anything you want, but for some reason he really wasn't that popular. Well, as far as I know. So the editorial staff thought they'd better revamp the strip. They'd seen an illustration that I'd done for Comic Media of a couple of people in space suits and they thought that possibly I could make a good job of such a strip, so they asked me if I'd like to. Of course, having been a fan of Dan Dare when I was a kid it was a childhood dream come true.

But unfortunately, though I'd got some ideas of what I wanted to do with Dan Dare, I was presented with a fait accompli - they said "this is the character, these are the stories, this is who's in the crew of the ship". I was disappointed, because once they'd started saying 'would you like to do it' I had actually done sketches of the characters and things which I hoped might be included. Anyway, I had to get on with what was given to me.

Apparently it was more popular with me drawing the 'new look' than it was with Belardinelli, so I continued doing it for fifty odd issues.

MT: And again for the second series.

DG; When Dan Dare was killed off, or rather floated off into space on a chunk of debris, I didn't think that I'd ever draw the strip again. But they decided to bring him back and asked me if I would like to do it. A very explicit synopsis of the story that he would be in had been related to me, and it seemed quite an enjoyable thing to do, so I approached it again with some enthusiasm. Unfortunately, although the writer Tom Tully is, just by his track record, a very good writer, it didn't seem to me that he really had his heart in Dan Dare. It seemed to develop into something of a pot-boiler with nothing really being resolved, and the plot not being advanced much. But again, because it had a lot of action in it, it was a very enjoyable thing to draw. We did have talks about changing the whole direction of the strip towards the end, at the point when there was a female character introduced. We were going to let her take over the strip and shift Dan Dare into limbo on his quest for the crystal of life.

But around that time 2000AD merged with TORNADO, and so Dan Dare was shelved again. I understand now that they are going to bring him back because of this TV series and so on, and they have asked me if I would like to draw him again, but I've declined the offer because I think that to do it twice was possibly a mistake, but to do it three times definitely would be.

With Dan Dare, you're on a hiding to nothing anyway because of the excellent work that was done in the fifties, in full colour with a whole team of artists, so I think I'd rather let sleeping dogs lie.

MT; How much of the original Dan Dare filtered through in your approach?

DG; Having been a fan of it, I was probably a little bit intimidated by it, because I knew "THIS WAS DAN DARE". I imagine it's like if you get the chance to draw Batman or Superman, you want to do it right. You don't want to damage the legend. And I know that to a lot of people I probably did damage the legend, although obviously Hampson's work remains no matter what's done afterwards, so I don't really think it's that serious.

But yes, I did try to do an extra specially good job on it, although of course it was a lot of work. At one point I was doing five pages a week, which as a regular thing is a bit difficult. Brian (Bolland) inked a few of the Dare spreads that I did.

I suppose I wanted to put as much of the detail and background in it as I remembered from the original Dare, though again as I say, because of these time limitations it just wasn't possible. It would have been really nice to do Dan Dare with two full colour pages a week and really take my time over it.

MT; I was going to mention that some of the Dares looked rather Bollandish.

DG; Yes.

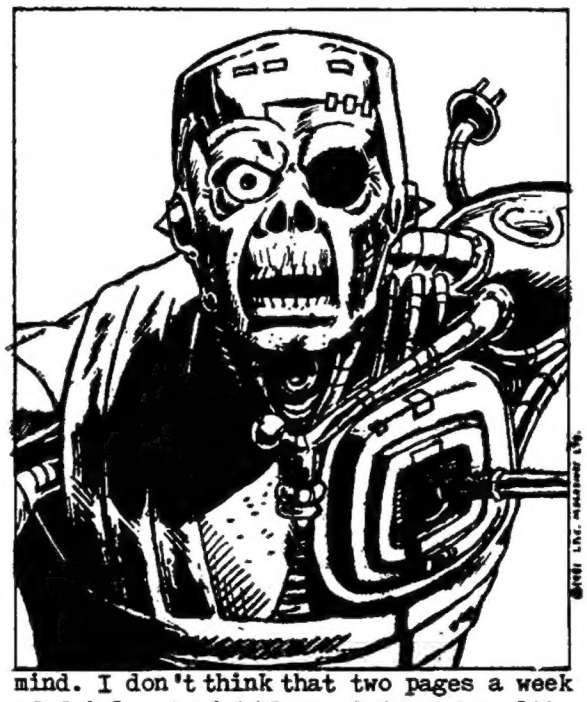
MT; Was that just because Brian inked some, or were you influenced by him at the time?

DG; No. I just drew them in pencil and Brian inked them, because with the spreads, they have to be in two weeks earlier than the black and white stuff, so it was always a pain having to draw a spread for a fortnight's time. We didn't actually draw any together.

When we collaborated before, on Powerman, there were a few times when I helped him out by doing backgrounds, and I inked the odd full page of Brian's stuff for that.

MT; Could a comic like THE EAGLE succeed or even just survive today?

DG; I think it could, but it would have to be done with the standards of today in



mind. I don't think that two pages a week of fairly straightforward characters like they had in THE EAGLE would make it today. I think it's got to be something a little bit out of the ordinary, in the way that ACTION was completely different to, say, the old VALIANT or LION. The people in it were modern people, and to a certain extent, 2000AD has the people of today, and the humour of today. I don't think that something with the same tone of voice as The EAGLE would survive, but I do think that there's definitely a place for good quality work. Unfortunately, there isn't enough money in comics today to do work of the same quality, on the sort of machinery that was used for THE EAGLE. But if some publisher was to come along, pay comparable rates and produce a similar package that was 'viable' in today's marketplace, I, for one, would like to be involved with it.

MT; Is there any significant difference in the way you'd approach Dan Dare to, say, Dr Who?

DG; I suppose that the biggest difference is that The Doctor is someone, albeit an actor, who really exists, and so you're somewhat tied down there, because you have to have him looking like Tom Baker, and acting like Tom Baker's portrayal, and he has to be in the Tardis, and he has to do certain things and not do other things, whereas Dan Dare can do virtually anything. I mean, they wanted me to keep the distinctive eye-brows that Dan Dare's got, but apart from that, I had carte blanche with his face. The second time I drew Dan Dare I did anyway; I wasn't even told how he ought to be dressed. So there's much more freedom there and being much more of an action character there's a much greater range of things you can have him doing. Dare can sock people on the jaw, and shoot people and jump over things, whereas The Doctor's a much softer and more humorous character.

MT; Is The Doctor a sufficiently visual character?

DG; I don't think he is in himself. As I say, he's a fairly quiet character, but it's the situations that he gets involved in that are visual, and from that point of view there's a lot of scope because he can literally be anywhere and do anything. Obviously, if Dan Dare goes to a planet, he's got to be there for some considerable time, and have an adventure there. The Doctor can zip in and zip out. So really the visual thing is more with that and the supporting cast in Dr Who, and I think possibly that it could be more outlandish in these respects in the comic. This is something I have moved for, at least.

MT; So it works well in comics.

DG; I think it works quite well, yes. Again, as a comic it can never be the same as the TV show because you can't actually see it move and it's not actually full colour with real people. But I think it does work quite well as a comic. Particularly looking at the Mills and Wagner stories, you get a really good read, and a good blend of action and humour.

MT; What's your opinion of Marvel's handling of the character?

DG; I was first approached about Dr Who by Dez, who again looms large in the legend (laughter). He phoned me up and said "ooh, you'll never guess what we're going to do, Dave. What's the longest running series on TV, with aliens and monsters and sci fi?" I eventually realised he was talking about Dr Who. The original idea was that Paul Neary would lay it out, I'd ink it in, and it'd be written by Steve Moore. Well, this didn't really sound like a good idea to me in toto, because I don't really like inking other people's pencils as a full time thing, though it's enjoyable once in a while. So I said I would like to draw it completely, but this meant that I'd have to leave 2000AD. However, they were prepared to offer me more money and a much better deal as far as rights were concerned, because as you may know, with IPC you have to sell all rights. Then I remembered hearing that Pat Mills and John Wagner had done some Dr Who synopses and submitted them to the BBC, but unfortunately because of changes in the regime of the BBC nothing had ever come of it, so they had a big stack of Dr Who story synopses. I mentioned this to Dez, and Dez was very interested, I think really because for him to 'get' Mills and Wagner also from 2000AD would be something of a coup. So he spoke to them, and he offered them a fairly good deal as well, and they undertook to write Dr Who. I was very pleased with this, because I think that Pat and John are two of the best writers working in comics today. Although the stories are credited to 'Mills & Wagner' because the ideas on which they were based were jointly worked out by Pat and John, in fact they were written alternately. Pat wrote THE IRON LEGION, John wrote THE CITY OF THE DAMNED, Pat wrote THE STAR-BEAST, and John wrote THE DOGS OF DOOM, and...what was the question?

MT; Your opinion of the Marvel version.

DG; Oh, yes. As far as the writing was concerned, I thought Pat and John had it spot on. The thing I liked about those early Dr Whos was that they were written very much in Pat and John's way, the way they would possibly write something for 2000AD, without any concessions to the Marvel universe. However, when the powers that be came into it, they, I imagine, couldn't see why Pat and John should be paid a good deal of money for writing something that wasn't in the Marvel mould, and thought that someone else, like Steve Moore, could do it more cheaply and adhere more to the usual Marvel way of telling a story. So consequently they brought in Steve Moore, who does write in a very 'Marvel' style.

MT; You work to full scripts?

DG; Well in fact Steve and I have just started working in the 'Marvel way', which is that he sends me a synopsis, I pencil it out and he then dialogues it. At the moment it seems to work very well. It's also revitalised my interest in the strip because after you've been doing the same character for eighteen months you begin to get slightly tired of it. So I think that's how we'll be doing it from now on. There might be a few more Gibbons touches appearing.

MT; Do you rely much on stills from the TV show?

DG; Well obviously if you're drawing a likeness of somebody you've got to have photographs, and the more photographs you've got, the easier it makes it. So I've got a huge file which has got every still that the BBC has got, plus I've got all the Dr Who annuals, and books on the making of Dr Who, I've got a whole stack of photographs that were taken at the session for the badges and records that are out at the moment, which has got some rather interesting off the record poses in it! I'm also lucky to have got a stack of photographs from Martin Asbury, who once had to draw Tom Baker. He actually took some photos direct from the TV at home, so I've got some expressions that aren't stock shots.

In fact the way that I draw it is to just pencil out the whole strip without referring to photos, leaving The Doctor's face fairly blank, and then go back and fill in the features, and that hopefully keeps it spontaneous.

MT; As far as the kids are concerned, where does The Doctor's appeal lie?

DG; I think The Doctor is a big kid. I mean, he's very cheeky and foolhardy, but it always turns out alright in the end. I think that's the basic appeal of the character. The appeal of the TV show, which we probably haven't used to best advantage, is the monsters, the shock value. So mainly it's the nasties, and The Doctor's humour.

MT; Any idea yet how Marvel will be handling the transition from Tom Baker to the new Doctor?

DG; No, I don't know anything about it. I imagine it might cause a problem, because obviously until the new shows have been recorded we won't have any idea of how the character will be played, or even how The Doctor's dressed. I believe the new series with Peter Davison won't be starting until next September, so up until then, we'll continue to do Tom Baker. We'll just have to see what happens. It's a shame because I'll have to get a whole stack of photographs of Peter Davison from somewhere (laughter). Even with the present series, the BBC hasn't allowed the Dr Who magazine to pre-empt the TV series in any way. We haven't had a lot of photos until it's actually already appeared on TV, which as I'm drawing the strip a month or two ahead means that there's been a slight time-lag in catching up on the latest costume for instance, so I think we could be in for problems.

MT; From what we've seen so far, it seems that The Doctor may be almost totally devoid of eccentricity - I wonder if he'll retain the visual impact that a comic would need.

DG; Well, it might do. I suppose Peter Davison's not as outrageous looking a character as Tom Baker. He looks just like an accountant or something. Perhaps a vet! (laughter) I'm sure they'll do something with him! I imagine it won't be a wide hat and long scarf, but they'll give him some visual hook for the TV. They'll keep the daleks and all the other monsters, so I don't think it'll make a great deal of difference to the visual impact.

MT; As the only artist I can think of who's worked on a regular basis for both companies, are there any significant differences between working for UK Marvel and IPC.

DG; Well, none at all, really, because the people that I deal with don't set the policies of the companies, and personally speaking I get on very well with everyone I work with at IPC, and everyone I work with at Marvel. As long as I get the script on time, and I enjoy it, and I get well-I get reasonably paid (laughter), I'm quite happy. The script arrives in the post, the artwork gets sent off Red Star. So to all intents and purposes there's no difference.

MT; Will you be doing any work for America in the forseeable future?

DG; I don't know. I was really surprised when I bought the second American Dr Who comic book to read in the letters page that apparently Marvel have been having talks with me about my "all-new American debut". They certainly haven't! I'm always open to offers, though.

MT; What do you think are the main differences between the approaches of the two industries? Certainly with the Dr Who books it's striking that the pin-ups at the back, by Cockrum, are very much more muscular than the British versions.

DG; The one thing I, or anybody else involved, didn't want to do with Dr Who was to make it...well, you know, I had dread visions of what the Americans would have done with the Dr Who character, they would have made him muscular, as you say, and they would have emphasised all the wrong things. What I'm really happy about is that we managed to keep it as a British product and do it in a British way.

MT; How much are you influenced by the American output?

DG; I don't think that I'm very influenced at all at the moment. When I was a kid, I was greatly influenced. I mean, I much preferred American comic books to English ones. Although strangely, when I think about my favourite artists I suppose my tastes were more middle of the atlantic because I seemed to like the Americans who drew like English artists, and the English ones who drew like American artists. I very much like Joe Kubert's work, which was a little bit out of the usual American model, and also Alex Toth's work, and then I liked Frank Bellamy and Joe Colquhoun, who seemed very American influenced. But as far as the present time goes, I'm really more interested in British or European products, because I think there's much better work there than in most American comics.

MT; How has the British comic developed in the last twenty years?

DG; I don't suppose it developed very much for a long while. A lot of the Amalgamated Press comics like THE LION and TIGER, were largely bland, very much like the text stories that used to run in similar comics in the 1940s and early '50s. But it seemed to me that there was a great uplift in British comics around the early 60s when you had comics like TV21 and COUNTDOWN and TV ACTION, which were graphically much more exciting, though the stories were fairly dull. I think the next real upsurge was around the middle of the '70s when ACTION came out, which was a radically new departure in style, and BATTLE, which was a theme comic, unlike the usual anthology type of comic. ACTION and BATTLE led to 2000AD, which I feel is probably the biggest step forward in British comics for the past twenty years.

MT; Where do you think the industry will go from here?

DG; I don't know. I suppose the economic climate's affecting comics just like anything else, and the last couple of comics that IPC have brought out bombed, namely TORNADO and SPEED, so I think it will remain fairly static for a while. I believe 2000AD is doing pretty well so I think that will continue. But as I say, with the economic climate it's very hard to foresee what will happen next.

MT; What's your general opinion of 2000?

DG; I think that 2000AD is one of the best comics anywhere. However, it's hard to maintain a peak, and there have been some not very successful things in it. But

I think of eras in the comic, discounting any contributions that I've made, like, for instance, issues 86 to about 130 or so, that anybody could be proud of.

2000AD is an interesting phenomenon because just as there's been a wave of comic fans becoming professionals in America, I think that what 2000AD has encapsulated is the first wave of British fans who have become professionals. Myself, for instance, Brian Bolland, Mick McMahon, Kevin O'Neil, Nick Landau, who was involved witn it editorially for a while. A lot of love for the comics medium has been ploughed into 2000AD and the general climate of 2000AD is that it's produced by people who care about comics, rather than by people who can't make a living in any other way.

MT; What's your stand on the 2000AD violence controversy?

DG; This question of violence, or say the fascism of Judge Dredd is very much overemphasised by people who probably don't read the comic anyway.

MT; Do you think that the violence that is there reflects the feelings of the times?

DG; Yes, you could say that. After all, kids see things on the TV and in real life that are far more violent. The question of violence in 2000AD is a red herring. All the situations are fantasy situations. Kids don't really have ray-guns, kids don't really ride motor-bikes around the streets of Mega-city one. There's got to be a certain amount of violence in anything, and I think it's got to be expressed that violence is nasty. I think 2000AD does that.

No matter what moralists or puritans would like to think, I believe that the average kid actually likes a bit of violence, a bit of gore and a bit of wickedness. Whatever evil or violence has appeared in 2000AD has been conceived with that same childish glee (laughs).

MT; Do the average comics give enough pages per story?

DG; 2000AD again made a bit of a breakthrough by having slightly longer stories, so the episodes are rather more self-contained. If you've only got two pages to tell a story, the first page is likely to be a recap of last week's episode, and the second just a teaser for next week's episode (laughter). I think that the length of story in 2000AD which is possibly four or five pages is about right for a weekly comic. It's satisfying without being too jumpy.

MT; Will other British mags follow suit?

DG; I don't know, but I think that from the point of view of the number of pictures and the amount of story that probably the average DC Thompson comic does it already and has done for a while.

The British comics that there are, which is the DC Thompson crop, and probably BATTLE and 2000AD are about that anyway. Ask me another question (laughter).

MT; What's your basic approach to the art when you're confronted with a script- how do you start laying out the page?

DG; What I normally do is read the script a couple of times so that I can see the story unfolding, as if I've seen a film of it, so I've got an overall view of it. I then do some small layout sketches; I list pictures, say numbers 1 - 25 and make marks by them as to what I want them to be, a big picture or a close-up or anything that occurs to me from my first reading of the script. I then work out the number of pictures I want on a page, for instance, if there are any good pictures I'll obviously have less. I then try to make each page a total composition, with variety. Variety is one of the most important things - variety of expression and character, the distance of shot, and angle. Eventually, I hopefully get the whole thing into a reasonable design.

Another important thing to do at this time is to get a flow from picture to picture. I do these thumbnails in some detail - not inasmuch as I would draw every finger on somebody's hand, but you'd certainly know from looking at them where the figures were. I also establish the areas of black and where the lettering is going. I then pencil it out on the board. I normally letter my own stuff, so I then letter it, which comes in quite handy as I don't have to do any unnecessary drawing to be covered by a balloon later on. Then I'll ink the whole job in, and finally I clean up the whole job and stick tone on it as required.

MT; Did you have any formal art training?

DG; No. The school that I went to had art periods, but only as a minor diversion from the more academic subjects. When I came to leave school, I didn't have art A level or O level or anything like that, and it was put to me that with the other qualifications I did have I could be doing a 'proper' job. So the only art training I've had is looking at comics, other things, and by reading vast numbers of books on anatomy, how to draw an egg (laughter), Let's Go Sketching and things like that.

MT; Can art schools prove to be a good thing to someone who wants to do comics?

DG; It's a hard thing for me to say, not having gone to art school. My impression is that comics are irrelevent to art schools and vice versa, despite the fact that comics work, although not highly paid at least has the advantage of being regular works. If you're lucky you can make a reasonable, regular living. You know what you'll be doing next week and how much you're going to get paid, which isn't always the case in straightforward illustration or design. I would have liked to have gone to art school because there are certain technical things that I feel deficient in, certain uses of materials, and I'd like to do a lot more life drawing than I've had the opportunity to do. But if you're going to draw comics, I don't think anybody else is going to teach you how to. I've a feeling that you're likely to be dissuaded from drawing comics by going to art school, but you'll have had your horizon's broadened and you might be able to bring into comics things you normally wouldn't have.

MT; When you're designing a new character for a comic, how much of that is you, the artist, and how much is due to the writer or editor?

DG; Well, in the case of designing, say The Harlem Heroes costume, the editorial

people told me there that it was a future sports team, they had to look flashy, and they had to look science-fictiony. I went

THE OLD COMIC SHOP

15 CATHERINE STREET·LONDON WC2

01-379 3345 Six days a week — 10am - 6pm

away, drew it, and gave it to them. Then they came back, a few suggestions were made, I redrew them and off we went. Or in the case of a character like Dan Dare, they said they wanted him to have a military look, and they wanted him to have a leather jacket on. In fact, I haven't really designed that many characters from scratch. Dr Who exists. A lot of Dan Dare was laid out. Charlie, the giant robot in Ro-busters, was quite heavily influenced from outside. So really what I would like to do is to design my own character, and possibly in the near future this might be happening.

MT; What is the typical Dave Gibbons day made up of?

DG; The typical Dave Gibbons day has changed slightly just recently. I used to work at home in the back bedroom, but I've now got a baby son who provides a bit of a distraction - from the point of view that I'd rather lie on the floor and play with him than get down to doing any work. So I recently moved into a studio with Mick McMahon, but my day isn't that different in that I normally start about 9 O'clock, maybe half an hour early, maybe half an hour late, and I work through with half an hour for lunch until about 6 O'clock at night.

MT; So it's basically a nine to five job. Or rather, a nine to six job.

DG; Yes, and I find that this works well. I find that by doing that I get up in the morning and, particularly with the studio, I start work, and that takes a lot of the pressure out of it because there's no self-discipline involved. If you just always work those hours, those are the hours you work. It also has the advantage of you knowing how long a job will take you because, unless anything disastrous happens, if you can do a page one day between 9 and 6, then you can do a page every day between 9 and 6, and I find that's a help as well. For instance, if somebody asks me if I can do a job by a certain date, I can say yes or no immediately, it avoids getting into trouble with deadlines.

MT; A lot of fans seem to have a romantic view of what life as a comics artist is like - what would you say to them?

DG; I don't think there's anything particularly romantic about it. The good things about it are that presumably you're doing something which you enjoy, which not everybody gets the chance to do, and you don't have people breathing down your neck when you work at home or you work in a studio. Also, of course, you do enjoy a certain minor fame, as evidenced by the fact that I'm doing this interview now! I mean, when you walk around Tescos (laughter) nobody wants to know your opinion on anything, so I suppose there must be a kind of ego thing involved, a minor fame, but it's not really romantic. What you do is sit in a room all day listening to the radio and looking at a piece of paper. So if you can take that...

MT; Your style is very clear and straightforward, what's your opinion of the more arty types, in America?

DG; The that should be borne in mind about comics, or at least the sort of comics that I do, is that their primarily entertainment, they're primarily communicating a story. It seems to me that anything that helps to communicate the story is a plus, and anything that obscures the telling of the story is a minus. So therefore my prime objective is to make it perfectly clear to the reader, who in some circumstances might be a visually unsophisticated reader, exactly what's going on. In other words, who the characters are supposed to be, what they're doing, and that one picture follows logically on to the next. Perhaps if I'd had more extensive and more varied training, I might see things in what you call a more arty way, but I'm afraid that I do see comics in the very straight-forward way in which I draw them. And that's my ideal way to draw comics. But as far as the more arty people in America are concerned.... who do you mean?

MT; Well, say for instance Neal Adams - the old favourite.

DG; Neal Adams is an excellent draughtsman, but I don't think he is an outstanding comic book artist. Somebody like Don Heck or Bob Brown is a good comic book artist - though obviously they don't approach it with the same originality of draughtsmanship, they do tell stories to people, which is what's required of them.

MT; I remember that when I was younger I hated the Neal Adams X-MEN.

DG; Yes?

MT; Because it was confusing.

DG; Yes, that's true. And moreso than the X-MEN, the DEADMAN series. There were whole spreads in there that I just couldn't make head or tail of, and couldn't be bothered to make head or tail of. I think there's a great danger of art for art's sake. If there is a simple way to do it, a straight-forward way, why not do it in the straight-forward way? There is no reason at all in comics for obscuring or muddying the water, which isn't to say that you've got to be obvious in comics. but you should take the course that most adequately gets over what you want to get over. Perhaps Neal Adams wanted to get over a confused view of things...in which case he succeeded admirably.

MT; Is there room for that sort of thing in more 'adult' comics, perhaps?

DG; This is a bit of an old chestnut as well. What are adult comics? I mean, I'm an adult reader of comics. I read, say, HEAVY METAL, and I find there's stuff in it that I can't be bothered to read because it's done in such a confusing or really uninteresting way. I'm tempted to stop and think "well I can't understand it, and because I can't understand it there must be something really deep about it".. But it's like The Emperor's New Clothes. I just don't think there's anything in most of it. The strips I would consider 'adult' are ones like 'Lt. Blueberry' by Giraud, which although they're dealing with more mature concepts are still drawn in a very accessible way.

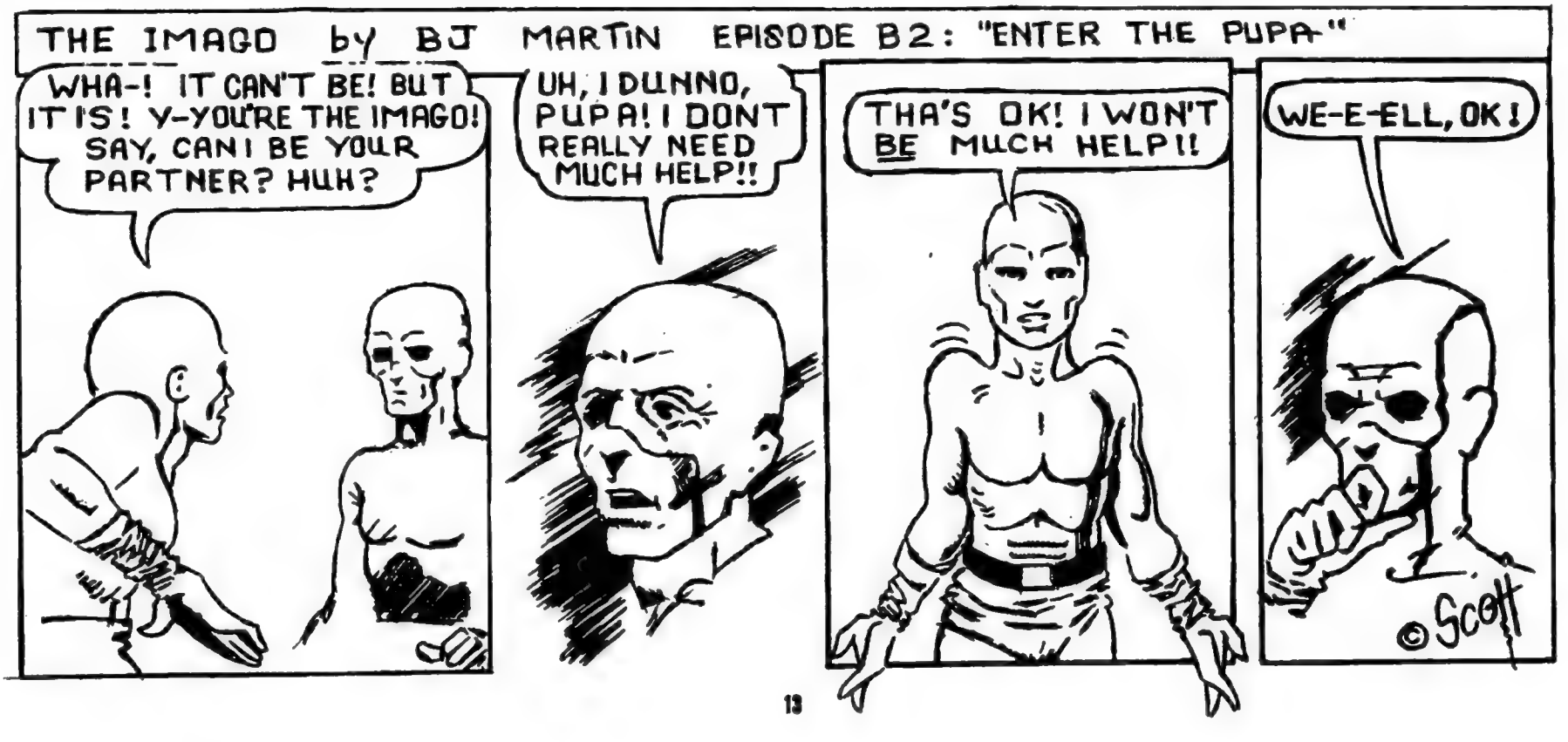
MT; A lot of fans would certainly be very upset if Neal Adams and Barry Smith were to suddenly vanish from the face of the Earth.

DG; I suppose on a personal level, I'd be very sorry if they did. They have done original things and obviously their work is well liked. But I really can't see what they've got to do with comics. You've already asked my opinion of Neal Adams' work, and if you must know, it's always seemed a shame to me that Barry Smith, who I thought was a very good comics storyteller, abandoned telling stories and went on to doing just illustrations.

MT; Any future plans yourself?

DG; I'd still like to draw comics, because what I really like to do is tell stories in pictures. To imagine a whole world where there are characters and things happening, which through very economical means I can hopefully relate to the reader. It's still amazing to me that a really good comic strip can as much fill the reader with wonder as the most expensive movie. Yet all you need to produce a comic strip is a piece of white paper and some black ink.

So I think there are great possibilities in comic strips. Then I suppose if you're going to do comics, the ambition is to get paid as much as you possibly can. I don't think comic artists are that well paid for the amount of creativity they put in. But if I could spend the rest of my life drawing comics that interest me, then that would just about fulfil my ambitions.


THE IMAGO by BJ MARTIN EPISODE B2: "ENTER THE PUPA"
WHA-! IT CAN'T BE! BUT IT IS! Y-YOU'RE THE IMAGO! SAY, CAN I BE YOUR PARTNER? HUH?
UH, I DUNNO, PUPA! I DONT REALLY NEED MUCH HELP!!
THA'S OK! I WON'T BE MUCH HELP!!
WE-E-ELL, OK!
©Scott

THUNDERMOLE, AWARE OF GALACTAPUSSY'S INTEREST IS HEADING FOR RHYL, A PLACE NOT KNOWN TO THE GENERAL COSMOS.

BUT.... THE MOLE SHALL NOT ESCAPE

GALACTAPUSSY ZAPS HER NUMBER THREE ZAP.*

* GENERAL STUN, CAUSING EXTREME DISCOMFORT, WATERING EYES, AND NOSE RUNNING.

KNOCKING THUNDERMOLE INTO A PILE OF GLODZILLA DROPPINGS.

THIS IS HUMILIATING

COME HERE MOLE.

I'M OFF!

USING ALL THE TECHNIQUES OF AN ENTIRE GALAXY, GALACTAPUSSY EXTRACTS THE TRUTH FROM THUNDERMOLE,

ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO KNOW MORE

GALACTAPUSSY MUSES..... IF ONLY I HAD THE BRAIN, I COULD RECONSTITUTE MY POOR HERALD

THE MOLE HAS AN IDEA...

SAY NO MORE I SHALL RETRIEVE SAID BRAIN

THUNDERMOLE HURRIES TO THE LOCAL MEAT EMPORIUM.

FAMILY BUTCHER

PIG'S FEET SHEEPS HEADS

JUICY STEAKS DEAD COW.

I'VE GOT THE BRAIN.

WITHIN TEN SECONDS MY HERALD WILL LIVE AGAIN.

10.9.8.7.6

5.4.3.2.1

BAROOM

SOMEHOW HE DOESN'T LOOK THE SAME

THE SILVER SHEEP?

Thundermole

MADE IN BRITAIN

MIND WARS

BY

RUAN LANIHORNE

STARLORD appeared three years ago, at the start of May, 1978. Due to the IPC policy of allowing strips extra space to get established in the first issue, "Mind Wars" didn't begin until the following week, but it wasn't long before it got into its stride. It ran for 21 weeks, up to the magazine's merger into 2000 AD, with one continuing, epic story, scripted by Alan Hebden throughout and drawn by Jesus Redondo--assisted in the 10th episode by Ian Gibson, and imitated in the 20th part by Mike White, apparently. The whole story runs to 121½ pages--it would have been longer, but the merger meant it had to be concluded quickly.

3000AD--and the human-dominated Stellar Federation has collided head-on with the dark and mysterious Jugla Empire, whose objective is complete and brutal control of the stars. The galaxy is at war!

Earth's great handicap is that they do not know the location of the Jugla's home-world; they can only fight a defensive campaign, taking care always to protect Earth itself against a surprise attack.

However, all this seems far away from the prosperous human-settled agricultural world of Vulcrugon, where twin teen-age brother and sister Arlen and Ardeni Lakam are enjoying their summer vacation from Vulcrugon University. But they have a part to play in the conflict; the ruler of the Jugla Empire has discovered that they are capable of absorbing primary neural radiation, which will turn them into two very powerful people indeed...

On a suicide mission, a Jugla warship swoops down low over Vulcrugon--in front of the twins' eyes, their home, including their mother and father, erupts into firy ruin...and then, while their minds are overwhelmed with the shock of this, they are both hit by bolts of primary neural radiation. They collapse -- to awaken to find a Vulcrugon interceptor, damaged by the explosion of the Jugla ship, falling straight at them. Until Arlen stops it with his mind, that is! Its human pilot, though, is dead. Until Ardeni touches him! The first episode ends with the soldiers who investigate shooting Arlen and Ardeni with a stun-ray, accusing them of working with the Jugla.

The ensuing trial is interrupted when the Jugla's ruler, Na-Rutha, tests his control over his new "weapons"--and they send icy terror blasting through every mind in the courtroom! They escape by teleporting back to their now-demolished home, where Yosay Tilman, a special agent of Earth's Federal Council, is waiting. "You and your brother seem to have been given incredible powers by the Jugla... The Federation needs you alive to find out why!"

And so they leave Vulcrugon in Tilman's ship; after Ardeni discourages pursuit, they rendezvous with the Terran weaponship Ortega's Folly, aboard which they meet Kola Rashnik, an allied alien member of the Federal Council.

Arlen, though, has been injured in the escape from Vulcrugon; he is in the sick-bay when Na-Rutha "activates" him again; the bridge crew are taken over, and turn the weaponship's prow towards Earth. And when Earth is reached, Na-Rutha plans to use his twin mind weapons to destroy the planet utterly...

Ortega's Folly is a special sort of ship, though; it splits into dozens of smaller craft, breaking Arlen's control over the bridge, and Na-Rutha's control over Arlen. The section containing the twins, Tilman, and Rashnik crash-lands on a planet called Yu-Jubum (!); when Tilman contacts Dr Varn, the head of the Federal Council, the orders he receives are clear:

"Under no circumstances can those two be allowed on or near Earth! They have become instruments of the Jugla--when under their control, they would make a mockery of our weaponship reserves! They've become too great a threat to the human race! Kill them, Tilman... Kill them now!"

The script is solid science fiction; the art is subtle and inventive, with a good use of wash and layouts. The foreign artists that IPC use may be renowned more for style than story-telling, but Redondo seems to have mastered both. Unlike the other STARLORD strips, "Mind Wars" is never in colour, except for its two cover appearances--but Redondo's consistent and clever art, along of course with Hebden's engrossing script, makes it unnecessary.

The fifth episode describes Tilman's half-hearted attempt to carry out Varn's instructions, foiled by Na-Rutha making Ardeni turn his gun back at him--and that in turn is upset by Arlen, so that the shot goes wild, to cut through the pole that Kola Rashnik, sloth-like, was hanging from to sleep. The next day they meet an old friend of Kola's, Zazda, who owns the fastest ship on the planet. Minutes after they lift off in the Solar Saint, they sight a group of Federation strike ships heading for Yu-Jubum. They watch in horror as the planet is destroyed from space--it shows just how much of a threat Dr Varn and his council consider Ardeni and Arlen Lakam to be, to order the destruction of an innocent planet in an effort to kill them. And then the Federation ships see the Solar Saint, and turn their weapons on it. The twins' mind powers act as a shield, but the strain is enormous -- it cannot be borne for long. Na-Rutha, to save his "weapons", has no choice but to commit a small fleet of Jugla spacecraft to a suicide attack on the Terran ships; in the confusion that follows, the Solar Saint is able to slip away, and get into trans-light drive.

Justifiably miffed, Dr Varn commits one of the reserve fleets that had been held back to defend Earth to locate and destroy the twins. And on the Solar Saint, the drive modulator explodes, killing Zazda and disabling the engines; while on the Jugla homeworld, Na-Rutha, learning of the weakening of Earth's defences, has his main fleets mobilised for an attack on Earth--and also orders the neural irradiations they're using to try to control the twins increased tenfold.

Under Jugla control, Arlen and Ardeni are able to power the disabled Solar Saint with their minds; like the main Jugla fleets, they too are heading for Earth, with Tilman and Rashnik unable to do a thing to stop them.

The Jugla fleet reaches Earth first; the attack begins on Miami, and before the defences can be mobilized, many cities are destroyed. Jugla and Federal fleets clash over the galaxy's biggest city; the city suffers, but gradually the Federal forces gain the upper hand. Na-Rutha seems unconcerned that his invasion fleet is being destroyed, though; to him it's just a diversion, as he watches the Solar Saint come in to a landing unchallenged in the Gobi Desert.

Luckily for Earth, the Jugla control of the twins fades just as they land; they, along with Tilman & Kola, hurry away from the ship. A Terran defence interceptor quickly destroys the Solar Saint, and, with Kola dying from the desert's heat, a squad of troopers appear, and attack. Arlen and Ardeni defeat them, but then the Jugla control over them is established once more -- before Tilman can act, the twins fade from sight. And they reappear several thousand miles away...

"Good afternoon, Doctor Varn. I am Ardeni Lakam... And this is my brother, Arlen."

"By the stars! The nightmare's finally come true!"

Yes indeed, Dr Varn; you are at last face to face with the Jugla's deadliest weapons--the human twins that you've had hounded across the galaxy. It's quite a cliff-hanger, leading up to the serial's first STARLORD cover the following week for the tenth episode; and the story is less than half over. Major characters have died--and more will follow over the next dozen weeks.

However, that you must discover in your own time; STARLORD is certainly a very collectable comic, with its good quality paper and 6 pages of interior colour. As well as "Mind Wars", this is where Johnny Alpha, the "Strontium Dog", began, and "Ro-Busters" too, plus "Timequake"; there is some good art here by Dave Gibbons, Ian Kennedy, Carlos Ezquerra, John Cooper, and others and, while some of the covers are a little off-putting, it's a very striking set of comics to collect and read.

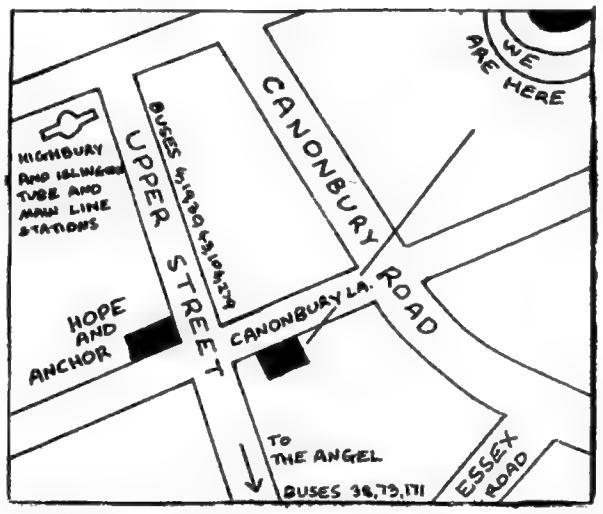
So, seek out all 22 issues--and you too will discover the secret of "Mind Wars"!

FANTASY UNLIMITED THE SHOP

21,CANONBURY LANE,
ISLINGTON,
LONDON N.1

OPEN MONDAY TO SATURDAY
11 a.m. - 6.30 p.m.

JUST TEN MINUTES FROM CENTRAL LONDON,YOU'LL FIND US EASILY ACCESSIBLE - A SHORT WALK FROM HIGHBURY AND ISLINGTON TUBE STATION,ON THE VICTORIA LINE.SO WHEN YOU'RE 'DOING THE COMIC SHOPS' IN LONDON, YOU'VE NO EXCUSE FOR MISSING US!



AND WE'RE SURE YOU'LL FIND THE VISIT WORTHWHILE - WE SPECIALISE IN COMICS,AND DON'T RELY ON ALL THE RELATED EPHEMERA (AND SOME NOT SO RELATED) THAT OTHER 'COMIC' SHOPS FILL THEIR SHELVES WITH.BECAUSE OF THIS,WE HAVE TO MAINTAIN EXTENSIVE STOCKS OF MARVELS,D.C.S, GOLDEN AGE AND FIFTIES,WARREN,BRITISH MARVEL WEEKLIES,2000 AD,EAGLE, TV21,BEANO,DANDY,BRITISH REPRINTS,AND MUCH MORE.IF YOU CAN'T VISIT US,YOU CAN RING ON 01 - 359 8329 OR SEND S.A.E. FOR OUR LATEST MAIL ORDER CATALOGUE.YOU CAN ALSO SUBSCRIBE TO OUR CATALOGUES - 6 FOR £1. AND OF COURSE WE DO BUY COMICS - WE'RE ALWAYS INTERESTED IN OLD MARVELS AND D.C.S (PRE 1975 APPROX.),ND ISSUES,AND CAN OFFER TOP PRICES FOR No.1s AND GOLDEN AGE/FIFTIES,AND ESPECIALLY TV21 COMICS. RING US FOR A QUOTE OR SEND A LIST (IF IT'S A COLLECTION) FOR OFFER.

The COMICOLLECTOR'S COMPANION & PRICE GUIDE

Volume Two
DC Comics

ALAN AUSTIN

£1.50

NOW AVAILABLE!

The one ESSENTIAL British fan publication.

Sixty-four pages crammed with information - values of all DC comics from the 1950s to present in good,fine and mint condition,including for the first time pre-distributed issues like the early Showcase (Flash,Adam Strange etc.),Lois Lane,Flash,Brave & the Bold,Mystery in Space, Strange Adventures,Superman,Batman and so on; complete listings of the following artists' work: Adams,Wrightson,Rogers,Starlin,Kirby,Ditko, Nasser,Wood,Frazetta,Al Williamson,Golden and Byrne; accurate details of the many scarce and ND issues; lists of virtually all heroes' appearances,and back-up features; and plenty of other trivia.

Once you've got it,you'll wonder how you ever did without it.

The price is £1.50 post free (and you'll get a copy of our latest mail order catalogue),make your cheque or P.O. payable to Fantasy Unlimited and send it to Fantasy Unlimited 21,Canonbury Lane,Islington,London N.1.

Comics © DC & D.C. Comics Inc.

a Walk on the Light Side

WRITTEN BY: MARTIN LOCK

RDH '80

SPACEWALK TIME; I'M SUPPOSED TO SNEAK ACROSS TO H.M.S. CONQUEROR, AND FIND OUT IF THE MANAGEMENT OF THIS DELUXE SPACE HOTEL HAVE TAKEN IT OVER.

THE MANAGEMENT, BY THE WAY, ARE HALF MEN, HALF FLYING SAUCER, AS AT HOME IN HIGH VACUUM AS A COMET -- UNLIKE ME!

OOPS! TOO MUCH POWER; I'M LIKELY TO OVERSHOOT THE SHIP. I'LL GET THERE THOUGH, DON'T WORRY!

ASTON

c.7

BUT OUR ARTIST HAS IN HIS CONTRACT "NOT TOO MANY SPACE SCENES", SO LET'S GET BACK TO THE CAPTAIN:

NOW WE WAIT. THIS COULD BE SOME SORT OF BLUFF, FINANCIAL OR POLITICAL SO KEEP CALM.

AIRLOCK

RUSSELL

1

RUSSELL! WHAT IN PURGATORY'S GOING ON? YOU RING MY ROOM WITH SOME HEN-BLASTED STORY ABOUT THE SHIP BEING SEIZED...

COMMODORE, I--

DON'T INTERRUPT! THIS IS THE ST. MORGAN HOTEL IN ORBIT--

--NOT SOME THIRD-RATE HICK PLANET! I WANT AN EXPLANATION--I WANT A FULL EXPLANATION--AND I WANT IT NOW!

I'M TO BLAME, SIR. AFTER TALKING TO YOUR CAPTAIN YESTERDAY, I BEGAN TO GAMBLE--AND I LOST.

I LOST MY MONEY, I LOST MY SHIP AND I WAS STUPID. I TOLD THE OPERATING DIRECTOR HERE THAT I HELD A CONTROLLING SHARE IN H.M.S. CONQUEROR.

ON THAT BASIS I WAS ALLOWED ONE MORE THROW.

YOUNG WOMAN, WORDS FAIL ME. I--

I LOST. AND IF THE SHIP ISN'T OPENED TO THE WHEELMEN, I LOSE EVERYTHING.

I WOULDN'T BE THE FIRST GAMBLER TO BECOME A SET OF 'SPARE PARTS' IN THE ORGAN BANKS.

2

UNFORTUNATE--BUT, PERSONAL FEELINGS ASIDE, IT SHOULDN'T BE ANY CONCERN OF OURS.

I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU'RE ANGRY, COMMODORE...ALL OF YOU. I HAD NO RIGHT TO DO WHAT I DID, I ADMIT.

DO YOU MEAN THAT YOU DO NOT HAVE A SHARE IN H.M.S. CONQUEROR, CARLYLE GRAY? IT IS A MOST SERIOUS MATTER.

MISTER LAFARGE, I MUST---

MISTER LAFARGE, DO YOU RUN THIS HOTEL? WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO HER, IF SHE CAN'T MEET HER DEBTS?

AS CARLYLE GRAY SAYS, THERE ARE THE ORGAN BANKS--IT WILL BE A SHAME, BUT I ONLY ADMINISTER THE POLICIES LAID DOWN, MY LADY.

BUT TOTAL DISSECTION? FOR A GAMBLING DEBT?

ENSIGN KATHLAR, KEEP QUIET! THIS WOMAN KNEW WHAT SHE WAS DOING. TO HAVE H.M.S. CONQUEROR SEIZED FOR A GAMING IRREGULARITY, NOT EVEN BY ONE OF OUR OWN PEOPLE...

CAPTAIN, *PLEASE*...?

MISTER LAFARGE, WE REGRET THAT YOU HAVE BEEN MISLED. WE HAVE NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR MISS GRAY'S DEBTS, AND I MUST ASK THAT YOU RELEASE HMS CONQUEROR RIGHT AWAY.

3

I'D HAD NO PROBLEMS, EXCEPT WITH MY NAVIGATION; A LITTLE BLUFF WITH MY JET-GUN HAD PERSUADED THE SAUCER-MEN TO IGNORE ME.

MAYBE THINGS WEREN'T AS BAD AS I THOUGHT...

HEY, CORPORAL, WAIT FOR ME!

FL'FF?

I FOUND A SPARE SUIT THAT FITTED ME.

BESIDES, I WANTED A BREATH OF FRESH AIR.

GLAD TO HAVE YOU ABOARD... LIEUTENANT.

ENGINEERING OFFICER PALMER WAS ON DUTY --A BIT OF LUCK REALLY!

WE'VE BEEN TOLD THE SHIP IS TEMPORARILY IMPOUNDED, DUE TO A GAMBLING DEBT, OF ALL THINGS!

NO WHEELMEN HAVE COME ABOARD, I TRUST?

NONE--AND THE REPAIR WORK IS CONTINUING.

A GAMBLING DEBT? WITH YOU CONFINED TO THE SHIP, SIR?

I'M GETTING A SIGNAL FROM THE HOTEL, MR. PALMER.

PUT IT ON THE SCREEN, PLEASE.

SITUATION REPORT, MR. PALMER?

ALL SECURE, SIR. LIEUTENANT FL'FF AND CORPORAL FRANK ARE WITH ME ON THE BRIDGE.

I BELIEVE OUR PROBLEMS WILL SOON BE RESOLVED, MR. PALMER. WE WILL RETURN IN TWO DAYS--PLEASE SEND FRANK AND THE LIEUTENANT BACK IN A SHUTTLE, WITH AN EPSILON KIT, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

CAPTAIN RUSSELL, WHAT--?

LATER, COMMODORE.

ACKNOWLEDGED, SIR. SIGNING OFF!

I ASSUME, MISTER LAFARGE, THAT WE CAN HAVE TWO DAYS BEFORE YOU COLLECT YOUR, ah, WINNINGS?

YOU CAN, CAPTAIN--BUT REMEMBER OUR LAWS. THERE WOULD BE SEVERE REPERCUSSIONS IF YOU ATTEMPTED TO REMOVE THIS LADY FROM OUR AREA OF JURISDICTION.

WE'LL DO NOTHING LIKE THAT, LAFARGE. COMMODORE, YOU HAVE A SUITE HERE, I PRESUME?

YES, THE MINISTERIAL SUITE...

IN THAT CASE, I SUGGEST WE GO THERE.

IT SOUNDS AS IF THE CAPTAIN HAS A PLAN, DOESN'T IT? AND YOU'VE GOT TO HAND IT TO MR. PALMER--HE DIDN'T BAT AN EYE AT THE CAPTAIN'S REQUEST, WHICH JUST LEAVES FL'FF AND ME TO WORK OUT JUST WHAT THE HECK *IS* AN 'EPSILON KIT'?

TO BE CONCLUDED!

15 CATHERINE STREET –

01 379 3

SIX DAYS A WEEK

MYL
COMIC

Mylar bags – a unique system for the storage of comics, now available for the first time to British collectors from Comic Showcase.

Normal plastic bags offer some measure of protection to comics but, for long term storage of the more valuable items in your collection, Mylar bags are the perfect answer.

They are 350 times more resistant to harmful elements in the atmosphere and offer increased protection against other environmental hazards.

Their rigid construction provides extra protection for vulnerable areas such as the spine and edges and their exceptionally clear nature will enhance the appearance of your collection.

These bags cost more but, the price is minimal when compared with the expense of replacing brown or brittle comics.

If you require any further information please write to us enclosing an S.A.E.

There are three sizes which, between them, cater for most American comics. All bags are 4 ml and have a double flap to ensure total protection.

PLEASE ALLOW UP TO 2

— LONDON WC2 5JZ

3345

K — 10 AM TO 6 PM

LAR
BAGS

SIZE A – 22p each

Regular size Marvels, D.C.'s and others from the late 60's to date.

SIZE B – 26p each

Larger Marvels and D.C.'s (eg. Annuals, Giant Size), Silver Age, E.C.'s and some late Golden Age.

SIZE C – 33p each

Large Golden Age

ORDERING INFORMATION

If ordering by mail cheques and Postal Orders should be crossed and made payable to Comic Showcase. For postage and packing please add the relevant amount as indicated below.

No. of bags	Postage & Packing
1 – 10	40p
11 – 25	60p
26 – 35	90p
36 – 50	£1.25p
51 +	£1.50p

28 DAYS FOR DELIVERY

THE JOKER IS A TRADEMARK OF DC COMICS INC. ILLUSTRATION COPYRIGHT © 1989 DC COMICS INC. AND USED WITH PERMISSION

Reaction

Chris Ash First, should this letter be printed, a word to John Green. This will be my first letter in Bem since #30, as the one in issue 31 was actually in MoI #6...so there.

Basically, this is to augment and update my article last issue. I've decided the most unpardonable omission was the absence of Paul McCartney's "Magneto and Titanium Man" from the survey. This song (from "Venus & Mars") also featured the Crimson Dynamo in the lyric and, when interviewed by famed Radio 1 dj Saul Lamborghini, McCartney revealed that he read and enjoyed Marvel Comics (remember this was a long time ago), and that "the drawings are great".

Speaking of Gambo, for someone who allegedly dropped out of fandom "circa 1966", he's certainly been doing his bit to spread the word. On his Saturday show recently, he (somewhat prematurely) announced the retirement of Julius Schwartz, mentioning his achievements and encouraging listeners to write and thank Julie for years of entertainment, even going so far as reading the DC editorial address over the air. He's also read out the latest "Peanuts" and "Blondie" episodes from US papers, reported the death of Norman Mingo, and was one of the few people during the recent media blitz on the Flash Gordon film to namecheck Alex Raymond (in a review on "Walters Weekly" in which he also managed to work Superman, Hogarth, "Whiz Comics" and Prince Valiant into the conversation). Most amusing of all was when PG informed John Peel, Jeff Beck and a bloke from UB40 once on "Round Table" that "Plastic Man was the progenitor of Mr Fantastic in 'The Fantastic 4' and Elongated Man in 'The Flash'." Just as well the mikes were switched on, or I dread to think what their replies would have been.

Incidentally, Gambaccini is not alone in trying to get comics across on radio. His fellow GBBHS co-authors, Tim and Joe Rice, did an in-depth special on "Eagle" for Capital a few years ago, interviewing many of the originators of that milestone in British comics history. And, lest anyone think the NME can't see any further than Marvel, the 13/12/80 issue carried a 4-page feature (including one page in full colour) on "Metal Hurlant"--and it wasn't by CSM. I might also have mentioned in my Strip Muzik survey that the British music magazine "Dark Star" carries a fairly comprehensive comics news section (or, at least, it did the last time I saw it).

Returning briefly to Paul McCartney, he has written the music for the forthcoming Rupert Bear film, Nilsson wrote the music for the Popeye film, Queen, of course, composed the score for 'Flash Gordon', and there are rumours that Mick Jagger will appear in the film of 'Annie' (??!).

Something else I missed last issue was a Marc Bolan hit called "Whatever Happened to the Teenage Dream?", a strangely Dylanesque diversion which finds the Silver Surfer lurking in its largely unintelligible lyric.

In the Top 50 as I write are 3 (count 'em, three) comics-related singles. Flash Gordon (courtesy of Queen) is on the way down, Sgt Rock (courtesy of XTC) is on the way up, and a Liverpool band called Teardrop Explodes have a new entry. The band seem to be quite fond of telling journalists that their name originates from a Marvel Comic (specifically "Daredevil" #77, June 1971), and are one of a number of bands gigging around London at the moment who found their name in a similar way (witness TV21, the Mekons, Brainiac 5, etc). Gosh! I sure hope that ties up all the loose ends I left dangling last time.

In response to complaints regarding a lack of "actual comics talk" in Reaction, I would like to make a few points about JLA #190. Like, this is the first regular-sized American comic I've bought for over a year. I picked it up for several reasons:- (a) the Brian Bolland cover; (b) the long, long awaited absence of Frank McLaughlin; (c) this comic book has always (sometimes secretly) been my fave -- even in the depths of campery, Sid Greene and Denny O'Neil; (d) a 25-page story, and; (e) most importantly of all, someone tampered with the controls on the DC printing press while the book was being run, as most of the story pages are actually printed quite clearly.

There's also the added enjoyment (for swipe-spotters such as myself) of hunting down the original versions of many of the panels. Lest anyone thinks I'm exaggerating, and that Buckler has merely appropriated Adams' style, check page 7, panel 1 of JLA #190 against panel 3, page 13 of Batman #251 as one of the most glaring examples. /(Gosh, Chris, you're being a bit unfair -- why, he had to add the starfish over the face, didn't he?)/

Speaking of Batman, although he misses the Hostess ® Fruit Pies gig in this issue, the Caped Crusader does star in a solo 1-pager called "Save Money: Subscribe Now!" which severely diminished my opinion of the World's Greatest Detective. "The facts are clear, Commissioner Gordon," says Batman, "the demand for DC comics is greater than the supply." Now, those of us who've been reading US comics almost all our lives will be well familiar with that which is required by "39 U.S.C. 3685" (whatever one of those is). All together now, gang: "A Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation!"

And, if the Darknight Detective had only bothered to look at the bottom of that issue's "JLA Mail Room", he would have learned that 194,574 copies of JLA are returned by newsagents every month. So much for truth, justice and the American Way.

I noticed Howard Stangroom slagging off Gerry Conway (also the writer of JLA #190) in Bemuscene, inferring that "doing a story without a battle" was some sort of meagre achievement. It reminded me that, nowhere in the fan press did I ever see any mention of Conway's considerable achievement in writing a two-issue JLA/JSA team-up (the one in which Mr Terrific died) without including a single fight scene (to speak of). Howard scorns this approach as being "experimental". Well, I believe it's the kind of experimentation we ought to see more of at DC & Marvel. Despite all the arguments about stories such as "Thrillkill", I still believe that comics should not be contributing to the cancerous cultural conditioning process that leads so many American kids (and those with the mental age of children) to consider gunplay a valid form of communication.

Finally, to that story about "Nationwide". The day a monstrosity such as "Nationwide" starts according comics (in general) the approval and respect we know they deserve, will be the day I stop reading comics. Coming full circle to music again, that was what was so fab about Punk. At the end of '76/beginning of '77, virtually any single on the charts could have found its way, fairly effortlessly, onto a Radio 2 playlist. By the end of '78, Rock & Roll (at least in this country) had regained its rightful position, approximately 3 steps ahead of what Harlan Ellison, perhaps inadvisedly, termed "the Monkeymass". I say to you, my fellow deviants, the creative vanguard of comics and contemporary music must always stay at least three steps ahead of the "Nationwides" of this world, or we may as well all join those aforementioned Americans, and deck ourselves with bullseyes as we go.

I don't usually write such long letters. Give us a break willya, and wait till J. Green contributes something a little more incisive.

Richard Domar I don't believe it. Marvel are actually changing a comic title from Marvel Preview to Bizarre Adventures and continuing the numbering. This is just not on. Dealers would prefer the numbering to begin with issue 1. I mean, Marvel, in a bid to make more money, have already decided to cancel all their titles as of the October issues, and in November all the titles will return as issue 1's. So, instead of Conan 128 it becomes number 1 again. All these issues will not be on sale on the newsstands but only through dealers. Unfortunately, one or two dealers are upset that they have to keep the price at 50 cents for several months, because they reckon that they won't make as much money as they would if they were to hold on to them and charge 3 dollars each to the fans. Future plans are that each title will run to 5 issues then be cancelled and return as another number 1. This will continue indefinitely, and if successful the run will be 4 issues or even 3. One dealer however expressed a desire to see each issue as a first issue every month, so that he could retire after a year's business. /(What an idea! But LOOK-IN does it every year anyway...)/

Oh well, on to Reaction, which wasn't too bad. I think Kath is wrong to quit the X-Men Fan Club just because she suddenly

finds the comic going downhill. That is no reason. Just because you're no longer a fan doesn't mean you shouldn't, aren't entitled etc to belong to a fan club. If I don't go to see the Wolves every week, that doesn't mean I'm not a fan anymore. If I don't go to Wigan Casino it doesn't mean I've stopped liking the music played therein. What I'm saying is that it can work both ways. You don't have to like something to belong somewhere. And in any case, as Geoff said in his letter, you don't have to be a 100% X-Men lover to join. While the emphasis is on the X-Men, it's still only a small drop in the comics ocean, and there is/was no reason why other comics couldn't be talked about. I am not afraid to sing my praises about Jonah Hex in Cerebro, and if Geoff cuts it out I'll still continue. Not all the X-Men Club members just read X-Men, so it's up to people to write letters about other comics. /(And it's up to Geoff, and the membership, to decide what the club policy should be. I gather talking about the Avengers is allowed, since they have the Beast, an ex-X-Man, in their ranks. As Geoff well realizes, the X-Men are a part of the Marvel Universe -- they can't be treated completely in isolation.)/

This SF/comics debate. I haven't read millions of SF books; in fact I doubt if I've read more than ten in my whole life. Mind you, I don't read books very often. There's just no time. I do like the way Rob Hansen said SF fanzines are reviewed, probably because this was the way that I reviewed them, once upon a time.

Blow me but doesn't C. Melchert go on and on and on and on and it's no wonder he thinks the lettercol is becoming flat when we have to read his "Look What I've Done" letter. God, the things I'd have done to his letter had it been submitted to Hoot Hoot. /(I must say that, after Bem-32 was finished, I received a postcard from Christopher admitting he was too hard on KW and Kev Langley. "KW did give some indication of his tastes having changed ("later, when Neal Adams burst upon the scene, I found myself looking at the work of Cardy & Sekowsky et al a little less contentedly"): he just doesn't make it clear he rejects his old taste, but rather seems to defend it. As for Langley, I dwelt too much on the half I didn't like, giving an altogether too negative tone to the letter as a whole." Can he be mellowing, I wonder?)/

Oh yeh, poor John Green and John Porter. One reckons he can't get his letters published, and the other thinks we object to outsiders. To Mr Green: you need no practice to get into Hoot Hoot. Just send in a subscription, and no problem. To Mr Porter: you tell me who has been objecting to your joining fandom, and I'll go and kick their fucking heads in for you, OK?

Dave Wishart

Thanks for another issue of Bem (or should I say 'Beem'); nice cover. At last Bem can compete with, and yea, outdo its larger American cousins. It's already got the better paper stock, now for some full-colour covers. Any chance of a photo-separated job? I wonder if Angus McKie or John Bolton might be persuaded to do a cover? /(Page 7 had a copy of 'Beem' being read because a character of that name was created a few years ago by the person reading it -- if you see what I mean. The cover scheme shown there was a previous version of Bem-32's cover, which can be found on page 2 of Bems 29 and 31. As far as a photo-separated cover goes, it would increase the cost of printing an issue of Bem by over 30% -- but it's not a possibility I'd rule out altogether. And I see no reason why Angus McKie or John Bolton shouldn't do covers for Bem -- who knows what lies in the future?)/

Bad news right away with Marvel cutting down a page. How long before the 50c, 17 page comic?

In response to KW, and 'talking comics', what's the general view? Recently, I've gone through that painful development, transforming from (to use terms coined recently in TCJ) a gourmand to a gourmet. Your choice might differ from mine, but now I'm down to a mere handful of mainstream comics. This was brought on by financial considerations initially--like most comics fans, I'm usually broke. (Incidentally, this is why I'm not active in SF Fandom--I can't afford comics, let alone SF, no matter how big a fan I am.) Having gritted my teeth, I waded through my collection, with the result that I now have a lot of stuff for sale, and more room in my cupboards!

On the subject of individual comics, I suppose the thing on everyone's mind is the X-Men reshuffle. While Byrne's departure is a loss, Claremont's still there, and one thing about Cockrum's return is that the Starjammers might pop up again. I'm all for cosmic, space-faring, adventures. When they go out into space, the X-Men have faired well, with the Z'nox, the Sentinels mk III, and the Starjammer/Imperial/Phoenix stories. Can't say I agree with KW about Ka-Zar. Though the first issue of the new series doesn't exactly set the Thames on fire (it's been established--by Roy Thomas in the X-Men? --that the Savage Land is HUGE; why bring in another unknown land?), the Mayerik issues of the last series were one of the high spots of the seventies. It's good to see him back again with Paradox.

The New Teen Titans are garnering lots of praise. While their inception is obviously an attempt by DC to do an X-Men type book, let's hope it finds its own individuality soon. After all, the Avengers were begun with the JLA in mind, and look how they caught on. (Having said that, I can't say I'm too excited by Colan being put on the book. While he's an excellent artist for a solo character like Dracula, or DD, I don't think his style lends itself to a group book.)

Again, KW seems pleased by the new Adventure. Certainly, it puts a lot of fun back in the comics, but, inexplicably, I've gone off Infantino. Despite getting into it with his Marvel stuff, and liking very much his few Daredevil issues, his return to DC has sparked something; but I was going off him already, shame, 'cause it's a unique style, and the Flash/Firestorm book is one that I like. /(While Don Heck did some of his best work of recent years on Flash, Infantino brings a glorious style to the book...and to "Dial 'N' for Nova" as well, of course!)/

One thing that's often pushed into the background in comics is who writes the stuff--especially with a fan favourite on the art. Would there have been such a fuss if Claremont was leaving the X-Men, but Byrne stayed? /(I would hope so, even though the matter's complicated by the fact that John Byrne was the book's co-plotter as well as pencil artist.)/

Let me congratulate Doug Moench on getting to issue 100 of Master of Kung Fu. This is one comic where the writing held it together during an 'artist-a-month' spree that seemed to hit when Gulacy left.

Mr Moench's new one, Moon Knight, seems to be drawing a lot of flak. I like it. If Adams can't be persuaded to draw (will he finish the X-Men album/special? I hope so), then Sienkiewicz seems to be the next best thing. After all, it could have been

Herb Trimpe or Don Heck on it. It became so popular, it got its own book, due to the art and story in the Hulk magazine, surely?

H.M.S. Conqueror is looking up (as well as through certain ladies' clothes), and this latest instalment is fine. Hope the post doesn't have any problems with Thundermole for the next issue, though.

Nice Kull illo by Cameron Smith on page 16. (Had to be; my middle name, Cameron.) Well, I liked Neverwhere, shall I start the line behind Mike?

Did anyone see the cartoon on the other afternoon with Scooby-Doo and his nephew, featuring a mystery story about a comics artist and his character, The Blue Scarab (?)--good clean fun, it was like animated Comics Journal! /(You mean it had a long interview with a controversial sf writer? Gee, I hope the subject of Mike Fleisher didn't come up...)/

Joining the Kitty Pryde controversy, I'll put my vote in for her. I thought Claremont's treatment of 'Alien' was well done, and Byrne does a nice monster. It was even better than the one in Battlestar Galactica. The only trouble is that Chris Claremont seems to forget she's supposed to be a genius. He's picked himself an extremely difficult character to do convincingly here; a kid, with all a kid's playfulness and worry, with the insights of a first-rate mind. I don't envy him.

Has everyone seen the latest issue of 'Cartonaggio', featuring Modesty Blaise and printing the complete 'Take Me To Your Leader'? It has essays, a checklist of where her strip has been reprinted, and articles, and is highly recommended for any Modesty/Romero fans. It's available from Bob Dunn.

Well, that's it for the meantime; don't spend all your money at the Casino! /(Now you tell me!)/

Maureen James
45 Dukes Court

Many thanks for Bem--I've been playing "spot the face" with "Castle In The Air", and I <u>think</u> I have found everyone I should have. (And, no doubt, a few who I shouldn't have.)

Note to John Porter: I used to try to convert people to comics, and to SF--all I seemed to do was to convert them into thinking I was a loonie. So now I only try to convert those who show interest. Maybe that's a defeatist attitude; I don't know. But I got tired of hitting my head against brick walls -- painful, too! Two other points in your letter I'd like to reply to:

1) I, for one, think it was a dirty trick on Judge Dredd's part re Judge Lopez.

2) And, please don't think I belong to an 'inner circle of fans', all I belong to is fandom itself, and if you want to join in, please do. Drop me a line if you want, by now I may have dropped <u>you</u> a line -- you can get the impression of an inner circle I know, especially if you don't join in often, but fandom isn't a closed shop, honestly.

A note here to say why I, personally, joined the X-Men Fan Club: I was a fan of the original X-Men from issue one, and became a fan of the new X-Men when they first appeared -- so I was collecting and enjoying the comics before I ever heard of the Club, and I'd still be collecting them even if there was no Club. Of course there have been storylines and stories <u>I</u> haven't liked; but others have, so who am I to try and change their minds? However, discovering the Club was a plus to my interest in the X-Men, so I'm happy. One more thing, just because I belong to the Club it doesn't mean I vote 'X-Men' in <u>every</u> part of the Eagle Awards; and I'm sure that's true of most members. Somehow I wouldn't be surprised if Teen Titans had their own fan club too before long, I've heard whispers from various sources --but I've promised not to say anything until things are worked out, and plans made.

Before I close I must say that Christopher Melchert unintentionally got my fertile imagination working; when he said "...closed up Gamora's costume" I had visions of Gamora standing there with Stan Lee frantically sewing a zip on the front of her costume before each issue! /(Ah, but what did Jim Starlin have to do when she got <u>back</u> from town?)/

Steve Grimshaw

Spiffing good read that Bem-32, well done that man. It took me a massive eight hours to read. Well, it only took me two hours to read, but I fell asleep during the Lee Marrs interview and the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. bit. Give my thanks to Mr Cruden for Comics Analysis 4 and Sector 2. They may have been a bit sparse textwise, but the illoes more than made up for it.

Kev Trundley is worried that Captain Marvel may soon be pushing up the daisies. Physically yes, but methinks mentally he will literally become one with the universe, sorta like the High Evolutionary.

What's Rob Hansen on about? "--Within SF Fandom, an SF fan is someone involved in SF Fandom..." quoth he, a member of a fandom who claim they <u>aren't</u> elitist and pretentious. Sorry to disillusion you, sunshine, but fan is short for fanatic. Anyone who's into SF, comics or a particular brand of bog paper for that matter is a fan. /(Nobody said fan was short for fancy pants. And all Rob was saying there was that SF fans, in general, do not tend to read as much SF as comics fans read comics; in fact, they may not read as much SF as some comics fans do.)/

Imago is really brill, so's Nasty Comix. HMS Conqueror would be too, if you could get someone to ink Dave's pencils. /(Do you have anyone in particular in mind?)/ Any chance of me inking a segment sometime, Dave? /(Aha!)/ Locky: you'd better bring back Thundermole, or I'll send Eugene round with that axe, and I'll tell him not to be careful. This comment <u>is</u> related to Bem-32; read Mr Ash's piece on music and comics again, then work it out.

Couldn't help noticing the review of Cheesecake-3. Dave Brock eh? Seems like a nice chap, even if he did allegedly wanna blow up Anderson's motor and put a contract out on Calvert -- but I thought Nazer Alikhan didn't like aging hippies? Also, if he hates u/gs why's Joe Dredd toking a spliff on the back cover?

Graeme Bassett

Since you'll have already received far too many compliments regarding the cover of Bem-32, I'll turn my attention to the inside pages. Nice to see Chris Ash back at work in Bem. American zines seem to have so many cretins working for them, while Britain has only one Chris Ash.

Oh, and it's nice to see that Imago has survived the Graphic Sense Holocaust. A triumph of content over space is that strip, and famous too, because between the third and fourth tracks of KINGS OF THE WILD FRONTIER Adam Ant shouts "I am the Imaga". Not a lot of people know that (He said, in a Michael Caine voice).

Nice to see that Marvel are putting a halfway good artist on Jim Bond, rather than some basket case like Cockrum. I saw a trailer for "Eyes" the other day, and it looks like they've started picking up scenes from the Fleming books after all these years. "Ah", as Max Smart might have put it, "The old LIVE AND LET DIE, towing them through the school of Barracuda trick". Incidentally, I read somewhere that they'd tried to get Sting of POLICE to play one of the hitmen in FOR YOUR EYES ONLY, but in the end he couldn't manage it. Hardly worth the effort, typing that last sentence, was it?

Anyway, while we're on the subject of tough he-men, who does this Christopher Melchert think he is, slagging off my old buddy Major "Mad" Mike Taylor (D.F.C., B.R.M.B.). I mean, who is this Melchert. What are his credentials, as Americans are fond of saying these days? Did he ever contract Septicaemia in a corner of some forgotten foreign field while striving to check the onslaught of communism, like my old buddy Mad? How soon they forget. If it hadn't been for quiet, unassuming souls like Mad we'd probably all be calling each other comrade, putting cheap EEC butter on our bread made from cheap American grain, drowning in gallons of vodka, and watching the intellectuals being shot. I mean, it makes you wonder sometimes, dunnit?

By the way, I've just managed to pick up this ADVENTURES WITH SCALEXTRIC thing which Dez Skinn threw his energies into, and I've got to agree with your review. Usually you've got quite rotten taste, but this painted comic was quite an impressive time-trip back to the late Sixties. One question, though... Speedmaster shouts "Let's Go" a lot. Does this mean that in his secret identity he spends his time writing to celebrities under the nom-de-plume of "Henry Root"?

Alistair McCraw's letter was quite interesting. I'm surprised an old greybeard like you didn't tell him that Ka-Zar is pronounced Kay-Sar. I've never quite understood how this discrepancy came about. After all, I've always been led to believe that animals aren't all that hot on spelling, or writing for that matter, lacking opposing thumbs or some such rubbish. So since Kevin/Ka-Zar would only need to spell his name if some outsider, some bloody tourist, came up to him and said, "Er...excuse me, Ka-Zar...er, Bill Butter's the name...just here f'the day. Brought the wife along, like. She wants t' know how to spell your name." I can only assume that Ka-Zar was taking the piss..."Oh...you want to know how to spell Kay-Sar, do you? Right, it's spelt Kuh, Ah...Zuh, Ah, Urr"--and Stan Lee took it all seriously, for some reason. I mean, it's the same as that bit in one of the last McGregor Black Panther stories, where that pillock-journalist, Kevin Trublood, goes up to the Panther and says, "Er... Scuse me, pal. Er, Kevin Trublood, News of the World. Uh, just over here on the old expense account bit...uh...'aven't actually found ote to write about yet... er...thought all this bit about Ku-Klux Clans, and burning the blacks might interest the readers, like. Uh, might alter it a bit...put a few rapes in too...er, anyway, pal, wondered if you'd care to say a few words like."

"Of course. Beneath outward facades of skin, men are but alike, the--"

"Er...yeh...right pal. Er...what's that name again?"

"T'Challa."

Ah, now this is the bit. He says his name is T'Challa, and Trublood repeats it, and Knowitall of the Wakanda says "De T is silent, honky." If the T is silent, how can Trublood repeat it? It's like if I told someone I was called Graeme but the G is silent. I mean, bloody stupid hero doesn't even know how to pronounce his own name. No wonder they gave him to Kirby. Knock a bit of sense into his head, eh? /(Eh? I always thought it was the H that was silent in your name...)/

Lawrence O'Halloran

The common practise in Bem of underlining key words is one I find disturbing and unnecessary.

If one is giving a talk from a prepared script, then it is helpful to underline in the script words where a change of emphasis is needed to show their importance. The speaker uses variations of voice for emphasis because his medium is the spoken word. A writer should not underline words for the same purpose. If he is competent he will have his own different means of bringing out the key words.

The underlining of words creates an undesirable hybrid between the art of

speaking and the art of writing. It is indicative of an inability to structure sentences for the desired effect.

PS: My letter is based upon the thoughts of C.S. Lewis found in the first page of the preface to his book, "Mere Christianity." /(I usually allow under-linings in letters and articles in Bem, though I do not go in for them much myself. Since Bem doesn't now have an italic type-face, the use of under-lining is a conventional and convenient substitute, both to stress and contrast certain words and to indicate book titles etc. Some writers use it as part of their style, making the column a bit more personal and direct -- but maybe you reckon we have all been reading too many Jack Kirby comics!)/

Steven J. Green

Rob Hansen may well have hit the nail right on the head with his comments on the diversity of opinion over what constitutes a fan. Like most people involved in sf fandom, I'd define a fan as someone who follows through his interest in the field by becoming personally involved in the social and/or literary sub-culture spawned by it.

To my view, someone who goes along to a mart and buys a few back numbers is not a comics fan as such, but a comics reader, or at best a comics enthusiast. It sounds like fan snobbery or even (perish the thought) elitism, but it's really just a question of semantics, a philological blindspot guaranteed to cause confusion wherever the two fandoms overlap--as they do in Bem. /(Serves me right for putting out a comics fanzine with a name that sounds like an SF fanzine, I guess.)/

Whenever I--or anyone else of like mind --criticizes comics fans for their apparent apathy (and don't worry, I think that enough has been said on that subject for me to steer clear of it on this occasion), I'm refering to the 'fan' as defined by sf fandom, not the casual comics reader who stumbles across a copy of Bem or MoI in Nostalgia & Comics, and buys it because his favourite writer is playing the confessions game inside or because he just happens to dig Dave Harwood artwork.

Unless this potential misunderstanding is ironed out, people like Phil Greenaway and I may appear to be wildly overreacting; maybe we are (Christ, I'd sure like to think that was the case), but the number of people we're talking about is not as vast as it might appear to Bem readers unversed in the terminology of sf fandom.

Likewise, I'd agree 100% with Rob about the "touchiness" of many comics fans, particularly fanzine editors, when criticism is levelled at them. The "Kill the F***ers" approach can be done, but it certainly steels you to objective analysis, something fans like Nazer Alikhan seem to find unacceptable.

It's times like that when I feel sf fandom scores over its comics "rival"; the participants seem to have a much more adult attitude towards both their interests and their activities. That's not to say that we're deadly serious about the subject (anyone who's been to an sf convention knows how far from the truth that is), but the infantile narrow-mindedness conjured up by Ivo Steyn's comments in Bem-31 is an absurd generalization; one of the main reasons I got into sf fandom in the first place is the willingness of most members to listen to new points of view. It's time fans like Nazer grew up and joined the real world.

As Lilian Edwards points out in the same issue, both fandoms have something to learn from the other: comics fans certainly need to radically reconsider the way their conventions are organised (or, rather, disorganised), while sf fanzines might do well to try and improve their visual impact--though sf's literary bias is unlikely to encourage its fans to produce the kind of art-orientated fanzines lauded by comics fandom. The best way to bring about this "meeting of the minds" is from the inside, of course; that's the reason I promote dual membership in fanzines like Bem. And it's having an effect, albeit slow to come about; Phil, Kevin Stubbs and Theo Clarke have all attended sf cons in the past year, and both Phil and Steve Gooch will have attended meetings of the Solihull Science Fiction Group by the time you read this. It isn't a major exodus by any stretch of the imagination (nor is it intended as such), but at least the groundwork is being laid for a better understanding between the members of the two "armies". It's a start, anyway...

(Of course, you realise you can't print a word of the preceeding letter or you'll be accused of favouritism again. Sigh...)

Rob Hansen

Another entertaining issue of Bem, though Lillian Edwards' somewhat one-sided comments on the section of fandom I'm most involved in, the 'faans' as she calls us, was a little irritating. In an attempt to balance the picture she painted, I present a quote from Dwight Decker writing in COMICS JOURNAL #32:

> "Quite often, fans finally decide they have read too many comic books as it is and give up collecting, yet hang on in fandom. Fans, fandom, and the opportunities for self-expression in fanzines seem much more interesting than the umpti-umpth return of Dr Octopus. Faanishness, or fandom for the sake of fandom, & faan fiction, fiction about fans, were, in the main, expressions of disillusionment with the professional comics coming out of New York, a loss of interest in playing armchair editor, and the discovery that Fandom Is Fun even without having to read what it is that inspired the fandom in the first place." --Dwight R. Decker, Comics Journal, Jan 1977.

The above describes exactly the position of the SF faan--hardly surprising, since the two fandoms largely use the same terminology. It is the faans who organized all the Easter conventions, Britain's largest annual SF con, throughout the seventies (with the exception of '70 and '77), the faans who spent five years in organising, lobbying for, and eventually running the Worldcon at Brighton in 1979, and the faans who are generally (or certainly have been in recent years) the doers in fandom rather than just passive consumers. An earlier generation of faans set up the BSFA (British Science Fiction Association) back in the late fifties, an organisation that has, on occasion, turned Frankenstein Monster-like on its creators but which is presently being run by--yes, you've guessed it--faans! Not surprisingly those who work hard at fandom also play hard, hence the "childishness" Lillian finds so offensive. But that's her problem.

Actually in recent years there has been a certain amount of resentment against faans and accusations of elitism, which are kind of bewildering, and I was fascinated to see an exchange between yourself and John Porter in Reaction last time which shows an identical situation arising in comics fandom.

Anyway, while on this general topic perhaps I should mention a recent rummage

through a buddy's fanzine collection that turned up some interesting items. One of these was an issue of a fanzine called BEM, whose first issue came out in April 1954 and featured among its many delights a (fairly awful) piece by one Harlan Ellison. Both Terry Austin and Joe Staton have been fairly active in SF fandom in the past, but I was still fairly surprised to come across a four-plate portfolio by Terry in a copy of a 'zine called GRANFALLOON dated December 1974. Nice stuff it is, too. However, the most interesting thing to come to light was a four-plate portfolio by Walt Simonson called "The Boats of Glen Carrig" dated 1971 but which is otherwise a complete mystery, as it's not bound into a fanzine or otherwise part of anything else. Most strange -- really nice, though. These items were in a large pile of largely turgid American fanzines, along with a fanzine called SUPER ADVENTURE put out by Marv Wolfman & Len Wein, and featuring a strip about Black Nova, who, as we all know, was the pattern for Marvel's Nova, and very similar he looked too. Having seen Wein's fan art I think I can say he's much better as a writer.

Hmm, although I didn't intend it that way, this letter has turned out sounding like a missive from a Bem SF fandom correspondent, if such there is.

Ben M. Crozier

I have just read Marvel's DAZZLER #2, a little later than I first got it...I have been putting my comics parcels to one side for longer and longer lately. For a comic and character that I had predismissed with cultured disdain, I could not have been more surprised to come across the quality and effort in Marvel's newest item of hyperbole. With no pretension other than being a polished Marvel new addition, and with no ugly adoption of hip talk, DeFalco & Romita Jnr. have put together a second issue which bears no relationship to the vacuous first issue --which was reason enough for anyone to conclude their Dazzler collection after that one issue.

As Reaction lacks a little comics talk recently, I hope this, if publicised, will draw some attention to the comic -- it really is a good balance of all that's good in comics scripting and pacing--and the inevitable personal traumas suffered by the heroine aren't too thickly laid on to be believable.

Aside from the writing, there is no doubt that the artwork by Romita Jnr and Alcala is as good as anything Byrne and Austin have been putting together lately--and the poses are not obviously poses.

Really a nice surprise to see a good quality light entertainment comic once

again.

Also on comics, how did the editors at Marvel and the CCA people allow Conan's comments about fish and women on page 40 of SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN ≠62 to see print, and an audience of 100,000? I wonder if it would have got by if it had been said by the woman to a man? Personally, I don't care for fish. /(Marvel black and white magazines don't have to pass the Comics Code, Ben. What's a "Vilayet Mackerel", anyway?)/

Paul G. Gill

I think all these "people" who write to newspapers, television etc saying that comics are a bad influence on children, and other "Werthamesque statements" (as Neil Jackson put it in Bem-30) are all a load of...how shall I put it? Rubbish?

The media never seem to complain about the cinema. Both comics and cinema have the same style stories -- except that the cinema has some shots never seen in Code-approved comics. Comics however have one big advantage over the cinema -- words! There are hundreds of words (honestly) that I have learnt through the comics, so why all the fuss?

I have been reading comics (mostly Marvels) for over six years now, and I've found one big difference between 1975 and today: realism. Who would have dreamed of having drinking and drug problems in the pic-strips in a Code-approved mag in '75? And today we don't see two billion new heroes every fortnight--only a couple or so deaths. I hope comics keep on this way --the right way!

I'm not too hot on writing letters, so you probably won't print it (I mean that --I'm not just saying it so I can be sure of getting it printed), but I enclose a couple of pictures, which I hope you'll print. /(Letter, yes; art, no. This seems a good excuse for me to talk about art submissions to Bem; firstly, do use plain white paper, not lined. Use black ink, not colours. Use a very fine fibre tip pen, or a very fine brush, or a "mapping pen" or similar pen with a nib -- indian ink is usually best. The width of Bem's columns, before reduction, is 84mm; try to keep your work to that width. Look at the work Bem is using; is your artwork up to that standard? I would strongly suggest that anyone who hasn't had illustrations printed before start off with sending work to some of the newer, lower print-run fanzines. Seeing your art in print is a very useful thing--you're more likely to have this happen with a fanzine where there isn't as much competition. And one last thing--if you want your artwork back or some acknowledgment, do enclose a self addressed, stamped envelope. Good luck!)/

Ed Hillyer

You seem quite proud of the colourful cover, a dash of vibrant scarlet and an overdose of tooth-brush flicking. It was solidly produced, but a bit staid for a cover--which, after all, is the main thing that sells a comic/magazine/packet of sliced cheese. Some action, emotion, or the reliable daring viewpoint might have made it more appealing -- but then, you can't exactly show what doesn't exactly happen in the strip. Not that there wasn't action and emotion in the strip. (It's horrible how easily you can be misunderstood, so I'll try and phrase my words carefully.)

The actual texture of the cover got my teeth on edge. That kind of gritty colour printing I found really irritating to handle; I disconcerted many dealers at the last Westminster Hall mart by frenziedly rubbing each issue I saw to see if it was okay to buy.

Although I have condemned Kitty/Sprite in recent correspondence, I now feel somewhat obligated to defend her from Doughty Dick Domar's clammy grasp. I feel there is definite "sense" in having Kitty around since Westchester is a "school", and it would look rather strange if the present pupils never left and new, young pupils never arrived. The X-Men were initially barely adults themselves--when Bobby first appeared he wasn't much older than Kitty. Professor X has also claimed responsibility for new mutant manifestations -- in this way the old X-Men, at least, were formed. Through this obligation he sought out both Kitty and Dazzler recently--and Cerebro is built to detect mutants like them. It would indeed appear sensible to recruit these new mutants at an early age.

If there was ever a character who has been through a lot of trials and tribulations, it is Ka-Zar. Relegated into oblivion when Tarzan dropped in on Marvel he has only recently returned to his own book. It is, however, a real slap in the face for "mightier than the rhinoceros" Ka-Zar, from the new creative (destructive?) team of Jones & Anderson. Now that Conan has assumed an Aladdin rôle in the mythological fables plaguing CONAN THE BARBARIAN, and has become a raving maccho sexist oaf in the Fleisher SAVAGE SWORD, I was hoping for a clean and noble savage replacement in Ka-Zar. But what happens? A travesty of his former self, Ka-Zar now daydreams of civilization and spired cityscapes, pledges love and marriage to all and sundry, and wants to settle down. You might as well place Mr Average in a steaming jungle and wait for a passing plesiosaur to devour him before he takes up golf. Of all people, did Bruce Jones have to engineer such a Kirby on Ka-Zar's unpleasant but well established character? Surely Ka-Zar does not need neuroses, nor does he have to fret about the mortgage payments -- it was only his arrogance as self-crowned "ruler" of the Savage Land and his uncivilized manner that kept him in (drove him to) the Savage Land in the first place. One last complaint -- the Pterons may make fit opponents for the Savage, but somewhat oversize hamsters gifted with flight don't make for exciting company. Judging by the cover of Ka-Zar ≠3, there seem to be even more winged races -- who does the air traffic control in the all-new Savage Land?

I would also like to bring Russ Heath's merits to the attention of fandom's appreciators of comic art, particularly the vociferous Chris Melchert who didn't feel he was worth a mention. Although I think he was discussing a certain period in comics at the time, I disagree with his argument over Russ Heath's presence in a list of worthies. Certainly Heath's early work is nothing out of the ordinary--but his work when he took over from Kubert on Sgt Rock (inked by both himself and Joe Kubert) is undoubtedly among the cleanest, best, and most perfectly styled comic art I have ever enjoyed. Russ was, and wherever he is now I hope is, gifted with a grasp of storytelling, action and intense emotional impact equal to that of Kubert and Buscema. His power -- which Archie Goodwin cited as "grit"--is a quality of harsh, photographic reality and rich texture. He was a master of his characters and scenery -- both of which had scope in a war title such as OUR ARMY AT WAR (Sgt Rock). His strong, clean blacks, subtle cross-hatches, and subliminal light effects I find stunning in their dramatic effect--even within the repetitive strictures of a war megazine Russ was able to present something new and refreshing in every issue. His depiction of warfare and explosive force set a house-style in DC that has yet to be equalled. Above all, when reading a Russ Heath strip you got to know and feel the stories, even got a feeling of being there--you got involved. Yet, even with Buscema's sturdy professionalism and Kubert's embellisher's flair combined in his refined tone and line--with what I suspect was his colour sense --he is relatively unknown. I must urge all fans to pursue his work, especially if you liked John Severin's Kull work, which was one of the most pictorial strips Marvel ever did. Heath is one step above, and cheaply priced. He did Ka-Zar ≠12 and some Savage Tales -- so look them up in your collections. I would also like to appeal to anyone who knows just which issues of Rock Heath did, as I'm still searching for more -- and also where else he has had his work published. Thank you. /(Russ Heath has been so prolific that the Overstreet Price Guide doesn't list his work, like John Severin -- so there's a lot for you to find yet...)/

I'm sure this is true of most cities and not only London--why are most comic shops in the depth of porno-land? Although I never had any trouble, my friends used to find difficulty from their parents over going to a Soho bookshop. Names like "Forbidden Planet" and "Dark They Were" do conjure up unwanted associations when among such company as "Ann Summer's International You-Know-What". I'm not a delicate character, nor am I a prude, but even I find Soho disconcerting at times. I've found unconscious policemen lying on the pavement and been pursued by a fruitcake before now, even in a potentially nice place such as Soho Square where the most dangerous things are usually hungry pigeons. We may all laugh at places such as the "Spanking Shop" (Ha Ha), but it can be embarrassing to read the menu on the window of the "La Campanina" restaurant, and to enter the doorway only to find yourself in the "Gay Stud Sex Shop" right next door--it has happened to me, and I'm still getting over it. (And I was trying to impress company at the time.)

I would like to see a page of Bem /(I hope he means Bem -- the little rascal is prone to mis-spell the word...)/ turned over to the creative ability of fandom at large. This was an idea Mo (as in James) and I were working on for Comics Review before its untimely demise, and I'm sure I have her agreement in proposing it to you.

I think a page (or two) could be given to the fans for the presentation of their own creations--under their own copyright of course. With the "Dial 'H' For Hero" series this idea is no longer unique, but I hope it can be expanded further than the superhero schtick. Basically, the feature would be open to all concepts--superheroes, aliens, heroines, samurai, supervillains, SHIELD type organizations, groups, western, space, gangster, supernatural, vigilante, funny animal heroes, ordinary human beings with interesting complexes or situations, symbiotes, mystical creatures, monsters, fantasy worlds and alternate realities and societies, historical pastiches and future world predictions -- the feature is completely open. If the idea could be presented with enough enthusiasm and directional freedom (the above list is enough to get people thinking), anybody and everybody could have something to contribute. Everybody dreams of their own characters, after all. What's more there would be more idealogical communication between fans, and in an ideal situation the feature could create some fan partnerships to produce their very own strips. It's how all fan-

strips start, but now they could start much more easily when people can spot the partners to choose when working on a strip. If the creator does not want to expand his character, two outside people could take it over--with the creator's permission, and sustaining his copyright.

This is the way to find the next Elfquest. Inspiring more fan strips is what Mo and I worked for with "All In The Family", which must be out soon -- we finished it ages ago. Please give the idea consideration --if you don't want to manage it yourself, I will gladly take the position of middle man. /(It sounds to me like a whole fanzine, rather than just two pages; and you seem the right man to put it all together as editor/publisher, Ed. But let's see what people think --write to Ed, and he can report back here, to keep us all involved.)/

Joe Mills

The only thing that caught my eye (in a rather boring issue) was the letter about Don McGregor.

'Pretentious' is a word I hate too. It's often used by people who are scared by emotion in writing--the sort of writer/critic who's terrified of appearing in Pseud's Corner. I've always admired McGregor for not being afraid to plaster soppy emotions all over the pages of his work--it's just a pity that his ability to write isn't as intense as his emotions.

Thinking of McGregor's work reminds me of how much I used to love his stuff five years ago--when I was only 16/17 and just the right age, I think, for that sort of writing. Comic fans of my generation are lucky because comics really grew up with us. First in the 60's there was the Legion, Spider-Man, the X-Men...and then when that was getting boring, when we were growing out of that, through came the more daring works of Gerber, McGregor and Englehart. I often wonder what the 8-10 year-olds of the early 70's made of Gerber's social/political stories, or McGregor's wordy dialogue and intricate stories. Probably very little. 17 was just right; younger than that I might have been bored, five years on, I'm too old--I can see all the faults and failings I missed at the time.

After 1976 comics stopped growing altogether--and they've been deteriorating ever since, as one great talent after another leaves the business.

Pity, isn't it?

Ivo Steyn

Time to rewrite history. In my letter in Bem-31's Reaction (when I talked about my attempts to breed another comics fan) I may have given the wrong impression by using the word 'convert'. A mistake. I do <u>not</u> go out on the street, grabbing innocent pedestrians, waving copies of Jungle Action before their eyes and yelling "Art! Art!" Nor do I continuously try to seduce innocent young girls (she's two years older than I am) by showing her the latest copy of 1994 and adding mysterious substances to her glass of mineral water, as some creep insinuated (thank <u>you</u>, Mr Bassett. Nice to hear about the new version of "Sappho and the Sex Werewolves". Think I'll wait for the Marvel Super Special, though). No.

A number of things interest me. Comics. Astronomy. Music. Mathematics. Wargames. Budgetting. History. Genetics. And a few other subjects. Now some of you may think: "My god, how can anyone be interested in .....(fill in your pet hate)?" Whenever somebody says something like that to me, I can usually explain how someone could get fascinated by any of these subjects, and the usual reaction is: "Well, it isn't my cup of tea, but I can understand why you would be interested in it". Only when I try to explain why I like to collect, read and read about, comics, do I run into trouble. So I take out the Detectives, the Nick Furys, the Master of Kung Fus, and tell them to <u>read</u> the goddamn things and judge for themselves. It may be a lousy way to do it. The statistics certainly are against me, but how else can you explain why certain stories manage to fascinate/touch/enthrall you?

Actually, I think all this is just one manifestation of a much larger problem, the (and you'll forgive me if I lapse into Sociologistanese) Collector/Non-Collector Interface. Which is a manifestation of the even more general Enthusiast/Non-Enthusiast Interface. "I like something --you don't. Is it because you simply don't <u>know</u> it, or is it a case of De gustibus non disputandem est?" Usually, it's the latter. End of conversation.

Bah! Let's do something original for a change, like Quarrelling About The X-Men. There were a few points in Lilian Edwards' last letter that made me laugh out loud. For instance "...in #141 there is not a single striking layout, or nicely drawn panel." Gosh wow, boring city, not <u>one</u> radically innovative layout or one extremely beautiful panel...in the WHOLE ISSUE! God, it makes you wonder how they manage to sell any copies at all! Seriously, I won't deny that the book is far from perfect in both art & story, but let's try to keep things in perspective. I think it's a fairly consistently entertaining comic, and while that may not be cause for hysteria, it does make it one of a (growing) number of rare exceptions in the range of comics on sale. So you don't <u>like</u> the comic. Fine, but don't start justifying your dislike in this way, it might be better to simply say "I don't like the X-Men", period.

Which brings me to another point in your letter, Lilian. You said "...their vast compulsiveness, which is usually equated in comics with quality--in fact with the X-Men it's really their soap-opera dangling plotlines... not any special magic." First remark: Any special magic is a highly personal thing.

I go absolutely ape over the Gerber/Buscema Defenders issues, particularly the Headmen story. A lot of people don't. I think those issues have a special magic that makes them ...special. They don't. Geoff Lamprey thinks the X-Men have a special magic, and I agree with him. You don't. Fine, but again I wish you wouldn't try so hard to justify the fact that you don't.

Second remark: what the heck is <u>wrong</u> with being vastly compulsive? God, I wish all comics were as compulsive as the X-Men! (Nothing quite as confusing as a comic, singular, which is called "The X-Men", plural.) And I doubt very much if it's just that compulsiveness which makes me reread issues of the X-Men, which makes me reread three-year-old issues of the X-Men as often as I do.

Maureen, it's not just sorcerors that are crawling out of the woodwork these days. As was pointed out in The Comics Journal, the number of conquering imperialist alien races is rapidly getting out of hand too. Add to that the disappearance of all the really powerful women and what do you get? Alien races, sorcerors, no powerful women... You've got it, folks. In two years time every comic will read like a Robert E. Howard novel. Bleeeaaarggggghhhhh!

John Porter

Thanks for Bem-32, and for publishing my letter. To anticipate any criticisms of it, let me first apologize to anyone offended by any of the various religious expletives --that was the result of a note from my literature professor on one of my essays that a piece of discursive writing should be phrased in the manner in which the author speaks. In my next essay he accused my style of being too casual, & my use of expletives repetitive and therefore ineffectual. You can't win.

One of my pet hates is people who sit on their backsides and complain that they're not involved, which was exactly how I came across in the letter. Of course it's up to me if I want to involve myself in fandom. On that subject, since I'm in the unfortunate position of being an author who can't draw, if there are any artists who can't write out there who want to get together with a view to competing with Tharg & Co...

Various other points raised by Bem-32 need commenting on, I think. Firstly, to adopt Rob Hansen's distinction between comic readers and comic fans would be a mistake. The two are so closely enmeshed it would be practically impossible to make the distinction anyway.

I suppose the last thing you need is another letter about the X-Men, but I do think it (they?) needs defending. The current critical backlash is, I feel, due more to a desire not to appear "trendy" rather than any depreciation in the quality of the book. It reminds me of a friend of mine who, as soon as programmes such as 'Not the Nine O'Clock News'

YES ☐ NO ☐ **Do you receive up to 20% Discount on your advance import comics?**

YES ☐ NO ☐ **Do you receive your comics promptly, in custom made cardboard boxes?**

YES ☐ NO ☐ **Do you receive all your comics in absolute mint condition?**

YES ☐ NO ☐ **Do you receive a FREE monthly comic news supplement?**

YES ☐ NO ☐ **Do you receive regular back issue and related items lists?**

If you can answer YES to all these questions...

...you must be ordering your comics from Bob Smart!

Even if you only answered NO to one question, you should send a large S.A.E. to see what you are missing! I will send you my FREE bumper pack containing:–

- Latest Advance Import List; offering all the latest Marvel, D.C., & Warren, comics and magazines. Plus a discount scheme offering up to 20% OFF your order!
- Supplement; containing the latest news, views & cover reproductions!
- Related Items List; containing portfolios, art books, magazines, etc.,!
- Standing Order Form; offering film & music mags, comics, fanzines, etc.,!
- Back Issue List; for the comics & magazines you are missing!

You will find I offer a complete, fast and reliable service. Every order is sent in a tough custom made box to ensure your comics remain in absolute mint condition. I have been dealing in comics for over 5 years and know what is important to the collector.

Are you using the best comic service available?

Bob Smart
COMICS FOR COLLECTORS

THIS IS A DIGITAL FACIMILE OF THE ORIGINAL FANZINE.
COPYRIGHT REMAINS WITH THE ORIGINAL ARTISTS,
AUTHORS, COMPANIES AND PUBLISHERS.
NOT FOR RESALE OR INCLUSION IN ANY
COMMERCIAL VENTURE

and 'Hitch-Hiker's Guide' become popular turns his attention to the next cult (late night repeats of 'Kojak', in case anyone is interested).

And so the torch is passed to The New Teen Titans, or just plain 'Titans' as they're being referred to in the scripts. Good move that, as Robin seems to be being represented as in his early twenties elsewhere. (On the other hand, perhaps having just turned twenty myself I continue to look upon the ex-Boy Wonder as a couple of years older than myself.) I've only seen the first two issues, but it seems to be an above-average DC--that is, excellent.

Further to Mal Burns' comments on FLEXI-POP, number three contains a brilliant Brendan McCarthy painting of Johnny Rotten --worth the 60p alone. If anyone knows if/when this is available in poster size I'd be grateful.

I don't want to leave Christopher Melchert's comments at the end of his letter concerning characterization, or more particularly what motivates superheroes to go out and fight crime. To use Chris' early sixties examples, Marvel versus DC, take the original 7 members of the Justice League and the original 5 Avengers. Of the JLAers, batman's motives have been fairly well documented, Superman & Green Lantern have both been charged with their missions by 'higher' authorities, Superman by Jor-El's sacrifice and Jonathan Kent's training and GL by the Guardians. Wonder Woman and the Martian Manhunter were both products of advanced civilizations and felt it was their 'duty' to assist the human race in its development. Aquaman usually acted to protect his environment, the sea, which only leaves the Flash. Alright, my thesis may fall down there, but at least his stories were fun. As for the Avengers, though, presumably Thor acted from the same motives as Wonder Woman and J'onn J'onzz, but as for Iron Man, Ant-Man and the Wasp, your guess is as good as mine. I'm assuming that the Hulk was just easily led, although everyone conveniently forgets that he had Bruce Banner's brain at the time. The dual personality/schizo thing wasn't added until much later.

I see I've fallen into the trap I criticized Kath Glancy for last time. I suppose once you've accepted the premise of men from Krypton and radioactive Spiders you have a right to ask for a little internal continuity and credibility, though. Just don't take it too seriously, that's all I ask. Different writers are bound to take different views of characters, attitudes change over a period of twenty years plus, and there are only a limited number of plot devices anyway.

Finally, I think Ms Glancy may have a point about the conspiracy against women. The loss of Batwoman and Jean Grey, and, less finally, Ms Marvel are, I think, going to be felt more in the long run than they have been at first (the death of Bucky in Avengers #4 was probably the biggest mistake Stan Lee ever made). As for Black Canary's abominable treatment at the hands of Fleisher and Conway, hopefully the distaff side of Bem's readership will have more to say than I can. /(In case there is a contract out on the more dynamic heroines, Bem is sending the Superswipe Revenge Squad to Edinburgh to act as bodyguards...)/

David Gryc — Well, after last issue's excellent team-up between you and Mike Taylor, I didn't think any issue would top it for at least a couple of months, but issue 32 was a really exceptional issue. I think you're back on the right track again.

I must say H.M.S. Conqueror was back to its usual excellence. I noticed our friend Mr Cruden -- I think he was enjoying himself just a little too much. Did his wife say anything at all? Come on, Martin, spill the beans, let's have all the gory details! /(The companion of the "Sector Chief" (Mike used to edit a fanzine called Sector, geddit? Blame Dave, not me) was an old friend of the Cruden family, and a frequent letter-writer to the old FT, whose latest guided missive appeared in Bem-30: Sadie McStrap.)/

Since I don't know what you actually look like (in the real world), I'd say you were the nice-looking thing in panel 5 of that page, next to Captain Russell. /(Very funny, David. Where do you want the body sent?)/

Moving on to Katholicity, I think the New Teen Titans are great, and, if any DC comic can come close to topping X-Men, I think they're the team to do it. We have excellent artwork from George Perez, and I think Marv Wolfman is doing an interesting job on the main characters of the book. So what if they are like the X-Men, wasn't the Imperial Guard like the Legion? It happens all the time, people will always compare heroes with others, as with Moon Knight being compared with Batman at the moment.

Reaction was great, really interesting; everyone seemed to be discussing comics, which probably makes it my favourite Bem for a long while. I must thank Mo for saying "Hi" -- a nice surprise to be mentioned. And to answer Mo's question about buying Elfquest, I've just bought 3 & 4, as they were the only ones Forbidden Planet had in stock. I must agree they are really great, with beautiful art and interesting characterization. I can't wait to get the rest of the issues. It's a shame it doesn't come out more often, as it's one of those rare comics that anyone can really get into and enjoy.

I'm sorry to disagree with Lilian Edwards, but I thought X-Men 141-142 was the best two-parter since #137; the splash page of Kate Pryde running through the streets was something else. The bit where all the graves are layed out was very touching; I'd have liked to see who else was there, though. The Hulk? Thor? Surely if Thor died, all the other gods would come and destroy the Sentinels--you can't say they are immune to gods! The New Brotherhood were interesting as well, especially Mystique with her questions to Kurt about his/their (?) mother. And you even get a glimpse of Wolverine's adamantium skeleton in the second part. The only thing I didn't like was the dangling plotline at the end, with no mention of what happened in the future; otherwise, it was great.

Who's read #145? I must say it's nice to see Dave Cockrum back, although it was just a little strange. I can't say I like his version of Kitty, or Arcade; they looked odd, Kitty looked ill and Arcade looked like a teenager. It's funny how Professor X could call up Alex, Lorna and Bobby without a word of protest from them --and yet before they've created like merry hell when they were called.

I think a team-up between Bem and another zine maybe once a year would be a good thing, especially for the other zine. How about Bem and The Owl's Effort, Bem and Starlight, Bem and Cerebro (now that would be interesting), Bem and Ogre, Bem and Fantasy Trader, Bem and The Alternative Headmaster's Bulletin, Bem and Rabbits Tend To Explode, Bem and Beyond The White Gates (good name that)? By the time you've teamed with those, there should be quite a few new ones around! Do you think you'll do any more? /(Well, what does our faithful readership think--not to mention the editors in question? I like the way you give Bem top billing every time. I can see it now, "Bem and The Comics Journal"...)/

Another cover caption game could be Dr Doom saying "So they thought they'd get me out of my own comic -- hah!" And the Thing is saying "One quick push and Sgt Fury will be off this cover for good!" Ka-Zar's saying "Bloody birdmen, always bloody birdmen! Give me a three-headed monster any time!" And Green Lantern's saying "God, I never thought the Harrods Sale would be this bad." Your turn? /(My turn? Well, staying with Bem-32's cover reproductions, Blastaar is saying "No, I saw this copy of X-Men #94 first!" Jonah Hex is obviously saying "Darn it, if I miss the train again my boss will dock me an hour's wages"...okay?)/

I must of course thank K. Williams for devoting half his column to answering my questions. Not that I meant him to, it was supposed to be Martin. /(One piece of advice Mike Cruden gave when he left was not to answer every question--I've got to leave something for next issue's letter-writers to get hold of, right?)/ I do apologize for not doing really interesting questions, but they were the first to come to mind. I agree about Wolvy's costume, nothing special; Ka-Zar, well, he is one of my favourites, so I can't agree with you there. I thought his last series got really good just before it was cancelled. The new one is interesting; I quite like Brent Anderson's artwork, I thought issue 2 was better than the first issue. And I definitely agree with you about Mystery In Space being a good spin-off title for little-known heroes -- but now that it's cancelled, it won't matter at all.

I can't really agree about Moon Knight. But let's see how he developes after a few more issues. Yes, Sienkiewicz's style is rather like Adams. And surely if he's in white that makes him scarier, since he stands out in the moonlight -- I think!

Does anyone still like THE MICRONAUTS? I think Pat Broderick's work is really great, and the current epic is most interesting. I wonder if all those recently killed characters will stay dead.

I think at the moment that comics are looking up; out of the 25-30 comics I buy a month I think I enjoy at least 75% of them. But this varies every month--I mean one month SPIDER-MAN is good, and the next month it's rubbish. I do prefer the two-issue story, or even the epics that come our way. It's funny how DC seldom go in for these; I wonder why? ROM's a nice comic. Does anyone agree that Sal Buscema's art has gone down in quality lately? Just compare his Avengers work with Rom. When he draws superheroes now, they just don't look as good as those older issues.

On the TV side, a new series of Blake's 7 is now being shot for screening in the autumn. Everyone's back -- though I'm not sure about Servalan. The new ship will be called the Scorpio, and a new character called Soolin is being introduced, to replace Zen presumably. I hope they don't change the theme music. /(Me too--it's the highlight of the "BBC Space Themes" LP.)/

What do you think of The Hitch-Hiker's Guide To The Galaxy? I think they pulled it off very well, though I thought it would have lasted longer than 6 episodes, they left quite a lot out. /(It covered the first radio series, as revised for the books and records to include Hotblack Desiato and "Disaster Area", very faithfully I thought; the Christmas special and second radio series should form the basis for a second TV series, with any luck.)/

Sorry if I've rabbited on a bit, but this issue you got me going on a bit.

Brian Bolland A friend of mine called my last letter to Bem "Pseud's Corner". An occupational hazard I'm afraid, because I return to take up the gauntlet on behalf of Neverwhere.

I followed with interest Corben's development through Slow Death, Fantagore, Grim Wit, Rowlf and so on. I particularly liked the hilarious/brutal "Mangle, Robot Mangler" in Slow Death 4. I was impressed with his later colour work, including the first episode of Den (aka. Neverwhere) in Grim Wit 2. In retrospect, that episode looks a bit shaky, but with subsequent episodes in Metal Hurlant it suddenly hit me just how really brilliant this guy was. This guy was going to shake comics by the foundations. Well, I may have been wrong, because he grew too big to be contained by the mainstream comic format, and in so doing went beyond the pocket of, and the horizon of, the comic fan. Hence a Rich Corben backlash.

I've just given Neverwhere a thorough scanning. I didn't re-read it. I don't feel qualified to talk about the plot. Sure, there were flaws you could drive a bus through. There's one book I know that has flaws big enough to store the world's nuclear arsenals in, with room to spare, and this book is the basis of one of the world's great religions. You shouldn't always worry about details (such as whether Kath wasn't a bit forward for a Victorian, and why she wasn't bald like Den, etc.). There used to be a kind of painting called impressionism. People were outraged by it ...because when you got up close it wasn't ALL THERE. You couldn't see the details. What people didn't realise was that the painter wasn't trying to show you the button missing from the shirt of the third figure from the left, he was trying to show you the quality of the light or something. The same applies to the telling of a story. In Neverwhere there were loopholes in the plot, yes, but the story speaks volumes about the subject that has dominated Corben's work since his underground days, namely the inter-relationship between sexuality and paranoia and violence. His work has so often been an expression of the terrible energy bottled up in the human animal. Many have seen it as sick, wallowing in gore, letcherous, and whatever; I've always seen it as an unnervingly honest confrontation with one's psycho-sexual nightmare.

All this and whatever else you have seen in Neverwhere was hung on an adequate plot. What is a "plot" anyway? It's an invented mythical device which creates a neatly tied up little parcel out of a sequence of events. If a certain scene doesn't quite fir into the limited space in this parcel it has to be chucked out! I wonder if there were any gratuitous sex scenes in it. If so, they should have been lopped off!

If Corben says Den and Kath screwed, they screwed. If they had paused for a quick, but gratuitous, game of tennis, they must have done just that. To paraphrase Mr Steyn: "I can only guess Corben's motives for his explicit depiction of tennis scenes. A childish liking of tennis perhaps!"

As for Corben's art in Neverwhere: it was patchy. But the low points were only made to look so low by the brilliance of the rest. American comic-book art is based on the stained glass window principle (as Ross Andru called it once.) It's based on a lot of other principles too, but this is the one from which Corben has primarily departed. American comic-book art is a much respected tradition, handed down through the generations, and the generations have interbred and turned the tradition into an inward-looking and self-protecting institution. It's all the more remarkable, therefore, that Corben has broken away from this institution, and away from the stained glass window principle (by which I mean linear outlines filled in with flat colour), and introduced a new illusion of 3D. Okay, other comic artists have created a rounded effect, but none have ever come close to Corben's real understanding of solid form dramatised by the interplay of light and shadow. His proportions are often a bit arbitrary and his drawing ability seems to decrease as we gaze into the background of his panels, or more accurately he becomes lazy. In fact the impatient way in which he seems to dash off the background detail tends to jar against the tactile realism of the close-up stuff. Be they occasionally ever-so-slightly off, his ability to create the impression of solidity and realism in his characters and space around them, has ME believing that they could leap off for a game of tennis at any moment.

Forms as solid as these could so easily be static, but he fills them to bursting point with energy and movement. You don't feel they are made of clay, but of flesh. He understands the way breasts fall, the way muscles knot and veins protrude from the neck. He really understands the naked human body. American comics have displayed the naked human body for decades. It is painted red or yellow or blue, but it is essentially naked.

Neverwhere isn't about Locnar & Uluhtc. You can read about that any time in Lovecraft books. The Lovecraftian imagery is related in that it catches on that raw nerve that leads down to the screaming centre of the human nightmare, as does Corben's...but what Corben has uniquely to offer is his love of the human body, and the raw emotions it can display. You may snigger at a man who wants to draw naughty nudies, but consider this: it's the sniggerer who is sick, because he is sexually repressed. (Or, so as not to be unfair on the women, SHE is sexually repressed.)

Having scared off the sniggerers I feel I can admit that I was particularly interested in the way Den's penis moved in relation to the movement of his body. A small(ish) detail not often seen in comics you'll agree. If an artist spends long days and nights trying to understand and draw something, he will require a greater than average interest and even love for that subject, and it is often perplexing and irritating to discover that his depiction of that subject causes in the viewer a spasm of doubt and fear and embarrassment. An artist may have a particular love of the female form, not unnatural in many men or malicious, but any expression of this will now lead him into a veritable minefield of do's and don't's. He has become SEXIST!!!

As for Neverwhere: I felt privileged to be able to peer into a man's mind. It may have been a little disorganised in there, it may have contained arguably gratuitous scenes of sex and violence; mercifully there were no explicit tennis scenes (!), but most important of all there were no gratuitous attempts to tidy up the contents to accomodate my prejudices. His recent work has shown signs of his being made to tidy up. His Arabian Nights didn't seem to come from the heart. It's a pity ...because it looks as if a veil has been drawn across the dark centre which is the real Richard Corben. But then, have you seen that set of pornographic prints he did lately? Pheeewww! Gee Whiz!

If the casual reader has chosen to miss out on most of the above, it can be summarized as follows: I kinda liked Neverwhere.

Kathleen Glancy I would have Howard Siegel know that if I was a beautiful red-head with iron armour, scientific genius, my own gang and everything, I would look for something better in the way of male company than Dumbello. When I wasn't busy conquering the world.

I wish I could believe that "Sappho and the Sex Werewolves" was a figment of the Bassett imagination. But it sounds exactly like the sort of film that the sort of film company that would employ Mr B would produce. I have a horrible notion it might even be real.

Come on, Mr Porter. Firstly, Franklin B. Richards has two parents, an uncle and a godfather who will probably be quite adequate for the job of training him themselves. Secondly, there is some doubt whether he qualifies as a mutant. Thirdly, is it not bad enough that the X-Men are reduced to Junior School level, without you wanting them to add on a kindergarten as well? As for Judge Dredd, leaving aside that he's a psycho (no man who wears a helmet in bed can be normal), when he ordered Lopez to risk his life they were in a situation where someone had to. The Judges have a quasi-military organization, and Dredd was in command. Historically, in military situations where someone's life must be risked it is never the commander's. (Star Trek was woefully inaccurate--Captain Kirk always risks his own life, and what is worse takes his second-in-command with him when he does it. He should have been court-martialled and cashiered very early in the series.) It also makes no sense to risk the pilot. So it was down to Lopez or Hershey. The conspiracy against women not having reached these shores, it was Lopez.

Christopher Melchert doesn't understand me, or maybe I put it badly. In no way did I intend to imply that artistic professions are a feminine prerogative -- just that dyed-in-the-wool male chauvinists regard 'artistic' professions as being suitable for women, and as somewhat effeminate if done by men. Since I wrote the article, there has appeared a female with an undeniably 'liberated' profession -- sea captain. So what do they do with her? They give her a personality right out of True Romances, that's what. The essence of professional liberation, to me, is this. There is a person doing a job, and if you heard a description of how the person does the job, and how the person speaks and acts in doing the job, you would not be able to tell whether the person is a man or a woman. Now, let us imagine Captain Leonard Forrester. Two of his crew are fighting, he orders them to stop. "Why did you hire him?" demands one of them about the other. "Because he's beautiful", says Captain Forrester. In other words, Aleytis (what a silly name--can't the man make up his own instead of pinching Jo Clayton's ideas?) is not a proper Captain. She is a 'girl' pretending to be a Captain. (And, as another 'replacement' figure, one of the least adequate yet.) Her ship might sink under her and she would probably be mooning over a man of whom she knows nothing--and who she took on as crew mainly because of his physical appearance.

As for the shortage of female fans -- I simply don't know why it exists in the USA. You tell me. For Britain, the answer is easy. The native comics are divided into 'boys'' and 'girls'' after the very earliest stages, and are mostly bought by parents for children. Superhero comics would be regarded by most parents as being for boys. Therefore, most girls never read any at all.

I now have an opinion of the new Ka-Zar book. Pretty pictures. Leading characters

have both had frontal lobotomies & severe degeneration of their speech patterns. Continuity calmly disregarded in about the worst way since the Black Panther got Kirbied.

So, Williams -- ask Mike Cruden what happens to those who incur my wrath. Ask me what Mike does to get back--on second thoughts, I'll forgive you. In the words of my fictional fellow citizen Miss Jean Brodie, "For those who like that sort of thing, that is the sort of thing they like." (She was talking about the Girl Guides, which is pretty appropriate for Sprite.) Anyway, you had the guts to admit to liking 'Dial H For Hero'. I too. The two of us, and possibly Harlan Ellison, 46, may be the only adults who will admit to liking Dial H. It will not become a fan favourite, having neither a Message or Realism. Actually, in one aspect it has a lot more realism than most comics--the young protagonists are the children--the biological children -- of parents who are well-adjusted, happily married, and both living. An aspect of the Conspiracy is the anti-mother syndrome. Where a hero or heroine has lost one parent, it is nearly always the mother -- Firestorm, She-Hulk, Batgirl, and Dazzler to name but four, and there are others. Very unrealistic, since men die younger than women and there are far more widows about than widowers. Even when there is a mother figure, she is usually not the natural mother--Aunt May, Ma Kent & Queen Hippolyta (if you believe the clay statue story) for example.

But I digress. I like Sigh. I agree with KW's opinion of the Albino Batman too.

I must be mellowing with age. Even Chris Claremont has managed to do something that pleases me. I find the young Siryn an interesting character. Just what relation is she to the former Banshee? She calls his cousin 'uncle', but that could be used as a form of address for an older cousin --Crystal, as a child, called Black Bolt and Maximus by that name. And she has his powers -- and his colouring. He, however "knows nothing of her". Intriguing. But beware, Chris. It would be very easy to displease me again. If you don't follow these hints up--if the visiting X-Men go home and, behaving similarly to the way they all did during your one-lot-thinks-the-other-dead fiasco, don't bother to phone Sean Cassidy and warn him that Black Tom is still alive and that a young woman who seems to be a relative of his has popped up--then I will become displeased again. Severely displeased. So displeased that I will think of some horrible thing to do with you, like prevailing upon the next pipe band to visit your part of the USA to come and play laments on their chanters (if you think bagpipes are bad, wait until you hear a chanter) outside your door for a week. Don't think this is not a realistic proposition -- any self-respecting Scot shown the issues of X-Men in which 'Scotland' and 'Edinburgh' purport to appear would be willing to do any little thing that would annoy you.

/(Would that we could move on on that relatively optimistic note -- but a mere two days later, a "P.S." arrived...)/

I take it back. I am no longer pleased with Claremont. Not since I saw X-Men 145. Obviously he has been to see "The Blue Lagoon" and decided, with no consideration for originality or probability, to adapt the movie's elderly plot in his own magnum opus. OH you great mass (well, little mass actually) of fandom, why do you persist in admiring this man? He is a HACK! Worse, he is a self-made hack. It is not that he cannot do better than this, it is that he is too damned lazy to try. I won't even mention that the reappearance of the Banshee in X-Men opens the way for a Claremont Continuity Conundrum between that book & Spider-Woman--I will only add that my opinion of 'Captain' Forrester's maritime abilities is confirmed by the fact that she and her crew are apparently given to running about on deck, in a storm, without wearing life-jackets.

Lend an ear, Chris. That awful droning sound will be 100 chanters tuning up.

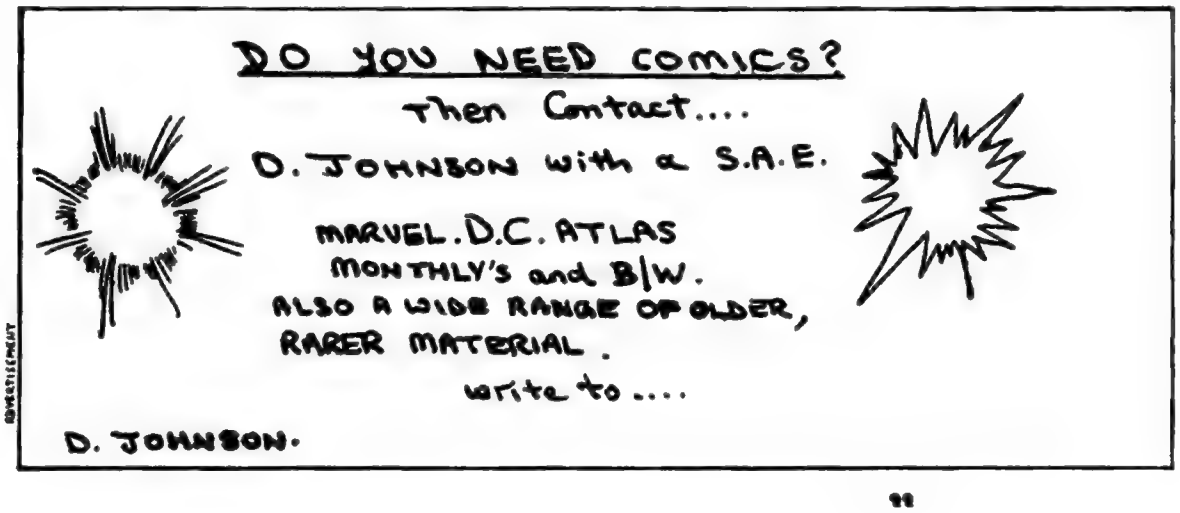
/(But Scott and Aleytis have only just been washed up, on their desert island--Chris could be planning anything for them, and they are a bit old for the "discovery of natural love" story, surely?)/

Lilian Edwards — Doesn't anyone else find the comics news at the moment peculiarly depressing? Only a few Bems ago, everything in the comics world seemed to be blooming. The increased page-count boded well for the expansion of characterization and more thoughtful plotlines, more & more standard comics (eg Captain America, Green Lantern) seemed by virtue of personnel changes to be ascending to greater things, and little-seen talent like Steve Englehart & Marshall Rogers was promising to return to 4-colour comics. Sadly, the result of all this eagerly anticipated activity has not lived up to my expectations. At DC, the increase in pages has largely been frittered away in irrelevant and banal back-up stories which usually appear principally dumping grounds for staff artists and writers to fill their quotas on (Levitz and Staton's Huntress is an honourable exception -- how I wish Wonder Woman was the back-up!), while at Marvel, a bare few months after the changeover, the number of pages is already being cut --would anyone like to bet how long before we're back to 17 pages, possibly at a standard price of 60 or 70 cents?

As for the "improved" comics, as I think of them, verily they are falling like skittles. Everyone knows about John Byrne and The X-Men of course, but personally I find his (and Roger Stern's) desertion of Captain America particularly hard to stomach, after such a short time and especially after their self-satisfied interview in The Comics Journal in which they claimed Cap was the character they most loved working on in the Marvel line, and they had such wonderful things to do with him, etc ad nauseam (literally, in retrospect). Daredevil, with no fuss at all or even explanation, has lost its scripter Roger McKenzie, and is now almost bound to go downhill since, gifted artist though he may be, and promising writer perhaps, Frank Miller is clearly not yet as well-trained as McKenzie was in establishing the mood and atmosphere that have been responsible for DD's excellence of late. Marvel Two-In-One has lost successively Byrne, Perez, and now the team that would always have kept it interesting no matter what the art was like, Macchio & Gruenwald; Marvel Team-Up has long forgotten the standard it achieved under Byrne & Claremont; even Spider-Woman, which was just recovering from Fleisher's onslaught, has been demoted to bimonthly, typically, as soon as it got a suitable team.

Even the deployment of talent at Marvel seems crazy at the moment. After seeing the Spider-Man Annual it seemed refreshing good sense to put Miller on Dr Strange--but no, Marvel has to drag him off to some hypothetical Bond strip that'll probably fall through anyhow, and have Rogers instead. Now Rogers would probably be very nice too--but I have this sneaking feeling that after doing one-and-a-half issues, probably inked by someone wholly inappropriate, he'll be sacked for missing his deadlines, or enticed into some alternative project. Meanwhile all the best inkers seem to want to pencil--Leialoha, Layton -- and the artists want to write--Byrne and Miller already mentioned. Is it being unduly harsh to say that Marvel are so frightened of losing their top talent to DC à la Perez that they'll let them indulge in any whim they care to name, even if it's to the detriment of the quality and quantity of their output? Perhaps this is too cynical--perhaps, as Jim Shooter claims, it's the only way of keeping their attention and interest focused on their work. But it should be realised that excellence in one discipline does not necessarily carry over to another and that the Starlins and Steranko's, the true writer/artists, are rare and gifted individuals not to be readily emulated.

Ahem. Perhaps I should say something about Bem itself? One item that cries out for an answer is KW's continued hate campaign against Moon Knight, an above average comic which deserves encouragement not despisal because it strives towards the standards set by the best practitioners of its genre, O'Neil and Adams. Would K rather have Sienkiewicz go to any lengths not to, God forbid, display an Adams influence, even to the extent of fighting his natural style? Adams does not after all have a copyright on large panels, vivid facial expression, and interesting camera angles, just as Steranko has no patent on the splash page. Moon Knight is a crimefighter of the night, with his identity cloaked in several guises and an intensity to his nature--would K like him to wisecrack like Spider-Man and dress like Firestorm, so there's no danger of him being mistaken for a certain Caped Crusader? In reality, in essentials, Moon Knight is far less like Batman than, say, Daredevil is. While the Batman is the sole and driving presence of his ship, the emphasis of MK's strip is split between his constituent personae. While the Batman's world view is limited to an uncomplicated disgust for all cowardly criminals, MK is far more sophisticated, having been almost on the other side of the fence himself and having far more sympathy for his prey. The theme of Batman could be said to be a single obsession, while that of MK is the exact opposite -- the multiplicity or at least duplicity of people and society.



Mal Burns'

UNAMERICAN ACTIVITIES AND SUBTERRANEAN HAPPENINGS

Once again, this is a rather short column. Anyway, here we go on the lowdown of what's new, and often obscure, in Britain.

Those of you who have had second thoughts about paying 85p for the last few issues of the somewhat indulgent HOME GROWN magazine may feel less hesitant with the latest issue, which centres on the theme of drugs and music. Bryan Talbot's exotic cover painting is also reproduced in full on the back, whilst one of his more obscure strips is reprinted with good tonal quality on the new interior glossy stock. The highlight of this issue must however be the interview with "Freak Brothers" creator Gilbert Shelton -- a recent guest of honour at the Angoulême Festival in France. This interview tells an awful lot in its mere two pages, and will be revealing even to those who think they have read it all before.

Also on Angoulême, the two other English-speaking guests of honour were Sydney Jordan and Gil Kane. I noticed that several foreign visitors were somewhat perplexed as to the connection between the two, and the equal prestige granted to each. The other dozen-odd guests of honour were an equally offbeat mixture--mostly French of course, and including Giraud, Claeys and diverse others.

Back in the homeland, we don't at present have much to show for ourselves on a level that would be considered serious in Europe. The only current alternative to the mainstream comics other than NEAR MYTHS (random to say the least) is the new KNOCKABOUT COMIX. I reviewed this last time (the address is 249-251, Kensal Road, London W10, from which can be obtained a mail order catalogue of comics, books, cards & posters), but the second issue is due shortly, with all new work by Hunt Emerson, Bryan Talbot, and others.

It's good to see that not all publishers have been discouraged by the spate of hacked-up science fiction art editions. New English Library have recently released a collection of work by the amazing Tim White. At nearly £10 per copy, you might think this a bit steep. All I can say is that it's hardbound, has a lot of full-colour pages, and is quite possibly the most impressive of the many showcase volumes we've seen in recent years.

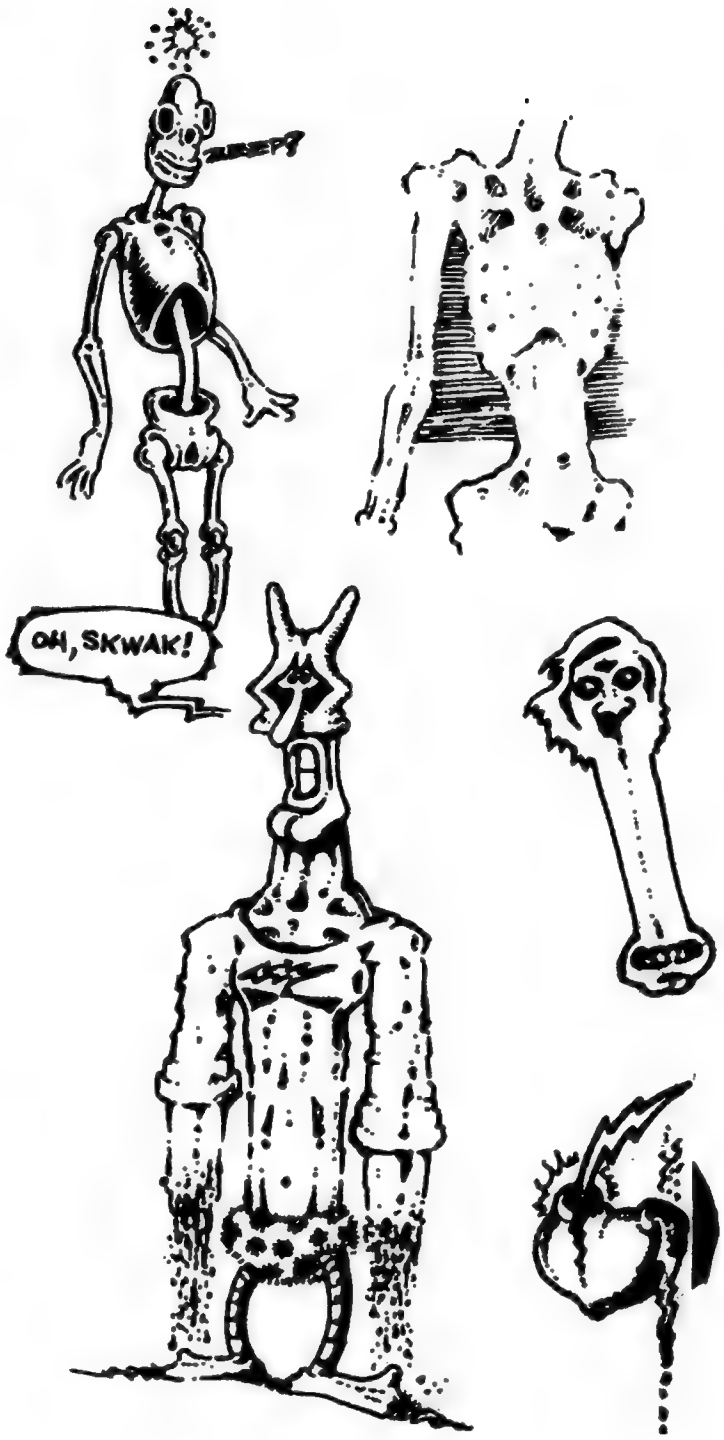
HOT NADS is the latest outrageous underground comic from Antonio Ghura, and, quite understandably, it does not give a publishing address. Mine cost 65p on personal request from one of the London comic stores, and I found it depraved, crude, and utterly hilarious. A certain well-known lady specialising in anti-smut campaigns features as the main strip heroine, whilst the rest of the book contains single jokes. My favourite is the "Iron Lady Put To The Test" item, wherein a certain French dignitary is heard to utter -- "Mon Dieu, the Lady is ...how you say...impregnable"...ahem.

Kevin Hopgood has brought out his second issue of CRISIS COMIX at a cover price of 30p from Snark Music, 58 Wakefield Road, Huddersfield. I thought the first issue was pretty fine stuff, but this one is even better. Well worth reading, and well worth supporting--so go buy it, kids.

Those of you who like the cartoons and strips found in the popular music press often moan, like me, that it is impractical to collect them. If so, you will be pleased to know that New Manchester Review at 182, Oxford Road, Manchester M18 9GP have released ONLY ROCK AND ROLL. This book runs to 64 pages and costs £1.50 (ISBN 0907166008) for a good retrospective on Ray Lowry. The vast majority of the book reprints the strips that appeared in the New Manchester Review before Lowry took the strip to New Musical Express. The latter part of the book contains the early NME episodes and some selected cartoons. It's all very topical and entertaining stuff, and I hope the book sells well enough to justify a second volume, bringing the series more up to date.

The British DC: THE SUPERHEROES monthly magazine appears to be selling quite well. Bryan Talbot debuts on the cover of the recent issue (no.6) with the Green Arrow character, whilst issue 7 will boast Alan Craddock's splendid painting based on the new Superman movie. Issue 8 should have a Batman/Wonder Woman/Superman study by Bob Wakelin, whilst number 9 will have Alan Craddock's interpretation of the Flash character. These could, however, be changed around at the last minute -- so I'm told.

The new Superman movie will probably be out by the time you read this, and it fully carries on the charisma of the first one. Hardcore comic fans would be best advised not to walk out when the comic-book legend becomes upset about half an hour into the film. All the rumours are true about the new romantic encounters between Lois Lane and our hero, but it is the comics themselves that provide the final twist leading everything back to



the usual and timeless kids-stuff scenario. If they're going to try anything other than an exercise in awe and wonder, we're going to have to wait a few more years for the third part before we find out.

Also on the movie front, the animated feature from HEAVY METAL is due to finish initial production soon. The film is due out in the summer of next year, with British artists Angus McKie and Chris Achilleos heavily involved. It could be quite a visual spectacle, though I can't quite imagine Corben's Burroughs pastiche, "Den", working without the apparently now-censored sex and gore. Still...

A forthcoming Bem will hopefully feature an interview conducted between myself, Colin Wilson, Susanna Smith and Don Lawrence -- as requested by Oberon in Holland. Having given this some thought, I would be interested in any feedback from readers on other British creators that you'd like to see covered in these pages. I hope Martin agrees. /(It sounds like a good idea to me; but do pick people who'll draw good covers for Bem! -ML)/

We've mentioned the Society of Strip Illustration's portfolio, STRIPS 80, before; this limited edition is going on sale in specialist book-shops at £2.95, but can be obtained from SSI Chairman Arthur Ranson by post at £2.55 a copy, including post and packaging.

A final plug goes to the Westminster Comic Mart on June 6th. The SSI are arranging with the promoters to have a special event at the mart. Top artists, and writers even, will be converging to display work, show how it's all done, sign the SSI portfolios, and generally try to behave themselves for your pleasure. You could learn a lot, spend money, or just gawk in wonder --but turn up if you can.

Until the next one...

-MAL BURNS

Bemuscene

STEWART THE RAT
by Steve Gerber, Gene Colan & Tom Palmer. Eclipse Enterprises; $6.95

I approached this book with a mixture of hope and trepidation; it could be so easy to write it off as a carbon copy of Howard the Duck. Then again, I had faith in Steve's artistic integrity, not to allow himself to fall into the easy trap of substituting the name Stewart for Howard, adding a few four-letter words, nakedness and gratuitous violence, and passing it off as an "adult" novel. True, the work does contain quite a number of anglo-saxon phrases and bare boobs to give a few knee-tremblers to the more adolescent audience, but they are incidental to what Steve is trying to express, since Stewart is just a coathanger for Steve to latch his ideas on.

I spent a slow, mellow Sunday afternoon reading and digesting this book, and Jack Kirby's words "the questions are always more interesting than the answers" constantly came to mind, since Stewart the Rat promises more than it ultimately provides. It depends on whether you like to do your own thinking or, as most tv viewers do, accept what's provided, and let the medium do your thinking/questioning for you.

The basic plot is simplicity itself, as failure boyfriend tries for revenge on successful ex-girlfriend and is thwarted by hero Stewart--comparison to most Howard scripts cannot help being made, wherein the hero is just a bystander dragged into the ensuing melée. Again, as with most Howard stories, it's Steve's impressions of contemporary life that entwine themselves into our minds. This book is really a search for identity and individualism in a conglomerate world; all the characters, however minor, are trying to find themselves or, with Stewart himself, a place in civilization. Although Stewart, full born with a persona passed on with the DNA of his biologist "father" (obviously a tragi-comical version of the author himself), albeit a rat in a human world he's more together than all the human characters, and lacks Howard's cynical near-paranoid personality.

Personality is really what this book is all about, although it's hidden under the disguise of "noogs", which are described as "the unit of being -- a measurement of pure life energy". The way in which these noogs are used determines the destiny of that particular person. Dr Fossick (the aforementioned failure boyfriend), by way of a noog pool creates destinies for others, primarily to use them for his own twisted motives. Here Steve asks what is real and what is false posturing, by parodying the modern era's current stereotype lifestyles: the disco hustler, the black stud, the evangelical militant, the radical lesbian, and the career woman feminist. My own impression is that Steve is remarking that it's one's own inner self that counts, and that eventually we all must look in the mirror of our soul and see what is there. How strong our character is determines how we cope with that knowledge--as one person in the book finds out.

As with nearly all of Steve's writings, this book can be read on many levels and like good alcohol it improves and matures with each tasting. It's the usual Gerber tour de force, but regrettably not a masterpiece--it leaves the reader with a sense that maybe more could and should have been said, as if Steve was groping for the right words to fully express a statement...but never quite found them.

Stewart the Rat lacks the overall completeness and satisfaction of a good enthralling story, but as a promise of better, fuller works to come, and as an interesting, thought-provoking thesis on life and identity, it is a book that deserves your attention, and should be read by anybody who considers himself a fan of Steve Gerber. Or indeed anyone interested in the idea that there is life after DC and Marvel comics, and in the future of illustrated literature. -Nige Edwards

TALES OF THE GREEN LANTERN CORPS #1
"Challenge!" by Len Wein, Mike W. Barr, Joe Staton & Frank McLaughlin

After the disappointingly ordinary SECRETS OF THE LEGION, DC's wholly admirable mini-series format re-emerges with an issue that has "collectable" all over it from the beautiful Bolland cover on. Barr's plot and Wein's script skillfully interweave a truly dramatic and cosmic crisis--something GL's regular mag could do with -- with the mandatory flashbacks which are after all the raison d'être of this book, while along the way we get introduced to a charming new member of the Green Lantern cast who bears a fleeting resemblance to a Wendy Pini elf!

Staton's layouts are getting better all the time, and even McLaughlin's inks seem less objectionable than usual...oh, to heck with all the constructive criticism, to quote the ace reviewer himself, y'know, I really enjoyed this... -Lilian Edwards

MASTER OF KUNG FU #100 (May)
"Red of Fang and Claw, All Love Lost"
by Doug Moench, Gene Day & Mike Zeck

Hm, well, yeah, 's okay I guess (yawn). I mean, it's quite cleverly composed and all that (bit unsubtle compared to "ordinary" issues of MoKF, but anniversary issues don't generally have much to do with subtlety...) -- but gee, fellas, you can't expect me to be enthusiastic about another Jack the Ripper story. Not that I can have read more than about 637 in my time, but... I suppose that the "Yorkshire Ripper" business made Doug think it'd be "topical". 10 out of 10 for bad taste, Doug. (When's Shang going to get a fresh sense of direction, by the by?) -K Williams

SPIRIT #26
published by Kitchen Sink; $2.00

Well, what can anyone say about this book? "Superb", and "perfect" spring to mind. Kitchen's SPIRIT magazine is a lot better than Warren's ever was. Better paper, with better reproduction of the excellent art. The Wally Wood Spirit episodes. "Life On Another Planet", Will Eisner's brand-new series, the concluding 16 pages of which are in this issue. The return to new covers by Eisner. Few pages of advertising.

A brilliant package, without a doubt.
-Ken Moore

MOON KNIGHT #7 (May)
"The Moon Kings" by Doug Moench, Bill Sienkiewicz & Klaus Janson

"The Moon Kings" is a straightforward comic book tale and, as with all the previous issues of Moon Knight, concentrates on effect rather than substance. This is by no means an unique trait, and at least Moon Knight has the redeeming quality that it is occasionally entertaining. However, this does not excuse the fact that such ill-defined and boring characters as Crawley, Gena/kids, Frenchie, Grant, and Marlene exist.

The plot: the population of Chicago slowly go mad as a craze-inducing drug is introduced to the water supply. Effect: visually interesting as Moench, Sienkiewicz & Janson dramatically pace a sequence of events leading up to an effective final page. Substance: none, people are graphically portrayed screaming/"going mad" but the effect is generalized, desensitized: no specific case is focused on to understand the torment/effect that the drug has on the individuals. The motivation of the "baddies" is equally ill-portrayed apart from the obvious monetary reward, there is no remorse shown by the villains in their fleeting appearances -- apparently these are thoroughly nasty gentlemen.

Moon Knight 7 is a good comic -- on a superficial, 15 minute, read & throw away level. -Stephen McGonagle

VAUGHN BODE INDEX
Edited by George W. Beahm, annotated by Vaughn Bodé; 1976

Vaughn Bodé (July 1941-July 1975) was undoubtedly one of the most uniquely talented cartoonists of recent times. His life was short and (if my impression is

ACE

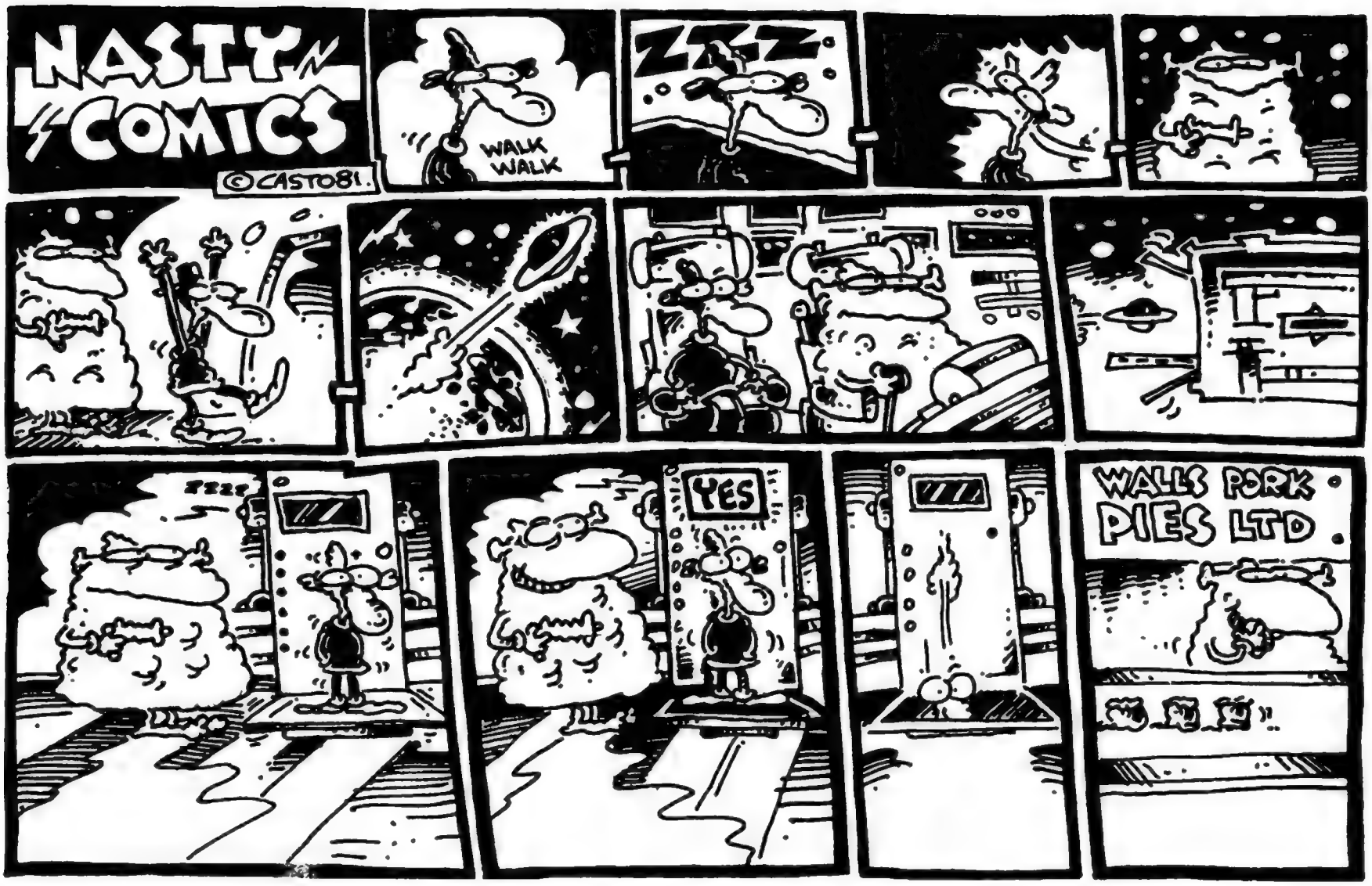
ACE is the Association of Comics Enthusiasts. The fourth annual set of mailings begins shortly--so this is an ideal time to take out a subscription.

The successful format of the first three years continues; the main body of each mailing is the loose-leaf British Comics Encyclopedia, a pictorial partwork embracing all aspects of British comics since they began in the 1880's: artists with "stripographies", comics with full character/artist indexes, annuals with ditto, listings by publisher, a complete chronology of all comic publications from 1900 to date, an A-Z of British newspaper strips, and more.

The second part of each mailing is a newsletter which lists all current and upcoming comics, juvenile magazines, and related publications, along with reviews, letters, advertisements from members, and reprints of current (and vintage) cuttings related to British comics from newspapers and magazines.

ACE is the only club for collectors of British comics (of whatever period), and exists primarily to disseminate information on British comic artists & publications, past and present. As such many of our members are professionals within the comics industry; students of the comic as a popular art form; prospective comics artists and writers; historians; authors; and, of course, collectors. ACE also sponsors the annual Ally Sloper Awards for veterans of the comic art profession.

To join, send £5 for one year's subscription to Denis Gifford.



correct) rather traumatic, but before he died he created an extensive body of work. Like George Herriman he specialized in creating fantastic landscapes and populating them with weird anthropomorphic creatures. He allegedly dreamed up somewhere around 1500 different characters, including the Man, the Masked Lizard, Dr Electric & Belinda Bump, Suksuksun ("the holy gook monk"), Cobalt 60, Biscuit, the little monster with the incurable disease (!), and of course Cheech Wizard, the Cartoon Messiah.

Bodé's work was published in a wide variety of periodicals, from adult maga-

National Inverted

35p BY MAIL

plus
GULPZINE NUMBER FOUR

THE FUNNIES FROM CON LUZ.
STRIPS, GAGS, ILLO'S, A COMPETITION.
AND THE OMINOUS GULPZINE TOO.
THINGS YOU KNOW THE OTHER WAY UP.

PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES/PO'S PAYABLE TO ED LUX.

zines like 'Cavalier' & 'Swank' to such respected journals as 'Algol' & 'Galaxy'. He also edited the first underground tabloid, 'The Gothic Blimp'. His best strips were highly detailed, introverted and obsessive. His lizards and 'broads' weren't just run of the mill cartoon characters; they were actually intriguing personal symbols. Even now, six years after his death, Bodé's strips are still very entertaining. To read them is to experience an authentic vision of another reality--a glaucous inner landscape where Night Lizards run in mysterious regions of being.

'The Bodé Index', compiled by George W. Beahm, is a handsomely produced and exhaustive book containing details of virtually everything Bodé ever did, from his earliest illoes and book plates to his most mature, involved & involving strips. In addition to a complete checklist, it contains three text features and numerous annotations by the Bodé himself. The written material is complemented by 13 pages of strips and a liberal sprinkling of spot illustrations & photos. The result is a detailed & authoritative work containing a number of fascinating voyeuristic insights into Bodé's private life (he was a transvestite, among other things).

Bodé often collaborated with Jeff Jones, and like Jones his work sprang from an intensely private inner wellspring. Though it could not, in my view, be described as a fitting tribute, 'The Bodé Index' is certainly a detailed and highly readable book, and as a checklist it can't be faulted. Breast- and lizard-fetishists will love it. -Pete Scott

THE NEW TEEN TITANS #7 (May)
"Assault on Titans' Tower" by Marv Wolfman, George Perez & Romeo Tanghal

An issue to tie up loose ends. What are Raven's powers? Who built Titans' Tower? Why? What happened to the Fearsome Five? Where did Cyborg come from?

It's all fun, and nicely illustrated by George Perez--although the ending was too sentimental and clichéd, I enjoyed it.

What the Titans need now is a few short adventures. Certainly nothing like the initial 6-parter for a while, at least.

Where to, now? I don't know, but I'll go along for the ride for a good few more issues yet. -Matthew Moorcroft

MAN-THING #10 (May)
"Came The Dark Man Walkin', Walkin'..." by Claremont, Perlin, Wiacek & Co

Welcome back John Kowalski (aka Death--congratulations on the "promotion"...)--what've you been doing since the late lamented WAR IS HELL, I wonder? More important, will you be doing anything once you've seen the back of this book, which so appropriately -- and deservedly -- gets the kiss of death next ish?

(Chris Claremont's obviously in a nostalgic mood these days, what with the unexpected return of Angie Freeman in Bizarre Adventures, and John Kowalski here... What next?) -H.W. Kite

WARLORD #45 (May)
"Nightmare in Vista-Vision" by Mike Grell & Bob Smith; plus Omac in "Welcome to the Funhouse" by Mishkin, Cohn, La Rocque, & Vince Colletta

Warlord continues to reinforce my feeling that a book with nice art but lousy script is infinitely less preferable than the converse. Despite all of Grell's considerable skill, and efforts at dramatic layouts, facial expressions etc, no-one is interested in what mortal perils his characters are currently involved in, because his characters are lifeless and one-dimensional, no more than extrapolations of the heroic ideal. All the scepticism in the strip seems to have percolated down to one character, Shakira, who is consequently the only member of the cast whom we care whether she lies or dies--the motivelessness and irrelevance of the plot is well summed up by her reaction to the question "what are we waiting for?" -- "For a sudden attack of common sense." -Lilian Edwards

X-MEN #146 (June)
"Murderworld" by Chris Claremont, Dave Cockrum, and Josef Rubinstein

Well, the Uncanny Ones have survived the departure of John Byrne and Terry Austin--the book's as engrossing as ever this month, and Chris & Dave, along with inker Joe Rubinstein, do an excellent job on Doc Doom and the new "X-Men East" team of Polaris, Havok, Banshee and Iceman.

("Okay, Brigadier -- get the anti-blast doors shut and seal off the shafts. If our editor insists I dress up as Sprite to review this book, I want protection! It's less than 400 miles to Edinburgh, after all, you know...")

Of course, the "Murderworld" story has been done before, in Team-Up 65/66 with Spider-Man and Captain Britain, and in X-Men 123/124 with the main X-Men group--but it's interesting to see a relatively inexperienced group going through the mill. And Doc Doom's got the main team in a bit of a predicament, too.

("Miss Padgett, I can't raise the guards at the front door. I'm sending Sergeant Benson to check up. Carry on...")

It's good to see Aleytis Forrester not go to pieces when Scott, following a near-miss from a lightning bolt, opens his eyes; it's good to see Arcade standing up to Doom, and being tolerated. Not so good is the old "house ad instead of lettercol" dodge--but Storm, transformed into organic chrome, immobile, unable to think, displayed as a statue by Dr Doom...yet able through her subconscious to summon the biggest weather riot in history, centred on Doom's castle...that's a mind-blowing concept, to me at least.

("Benson? Benson? Don't worry, Miss Padgett, we're perfectly safe. The radio must be on the blink, that's all.")

This book remains as gripping as ever, with characters one quickly comes to care about--masses of them! Bet you can't just read one issue...

("Hey, there was a guard standing just over there a minute ago, just where that red stain is now. What's happening?")

("Who are you... Kathleen? Is it--")

--SNIKKK!-- -Christine Padgett

CONQUISTADOR

14 KENT HOUSE LANE
BECKENHAM KENT BR3 1LF

ALL ORDERS MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY CHEQUE OR POSTAL ORDER MADE PAYABLE TO CONQUISTADOR. ALL ORDERS SENT AT PURCHASERS RISK. CREDIT NOTES ON UNFILLED ORDERS UNLESS REFUND REQUESTED. ALL PACKAGES SECURELY WRAPPED AND SENT WITHIN 4 DAYS OF ORDER. UNSATISFACTORY ITEMS RETURNABLE WITHIN 7 DAYS FOR FULL REFUND ALL PRICES ARE PER ISSUE. POSTAGE MIN 60P: 1-6 COMICS THEN 6P PER COMIC MAX £2.50: MAGS 15P EACH.

NOW IN STOCK! LIMITED SUPPLY ORDER TODAY!!
FEB/MAR '81 NON DISTRIBUTED MARVELS

MOONKNIGHT 4, 5, 50P.
DAREDEVIL 169 50P
THOR 304, 305 50P
M. SPOTLIGHT 11. 50P
M. PREMIERE 58 50P
M. TWO IN ONE 72, 73. 50P
M. TEAM UP 102, 103 50P
DEFENDERS 92, 93, 50P
IRON MAN 143, 144. 50P
CAPTAIN AMERICA 254, 255. 50P
MASTER KUNG FU 97, 98 50P
GHOST RIDER 53, 54 50P
SHE-HULK 35, 36 50P
AVENGERS 204, 205 55P
X-MEN 142, 143 65P
ALL OTHER FEB-MAR '81 MARVELS AT 30P (MICRONAUTS, SPIDERMAN, ROM, HULK, CONAN, SHE HULK ETC)
X-MEN PORTFOLIO £4.25 INC P.P.
SPIRIT PORT. SIGNED BY EISNER 11 PRINTS IN FULL COLOUR IN DELUXE FOLDER £30 INC. P.P.

ADVANCE ORDERS NOW BEING TAKEN ON 1981 OVERSTREET PRICE GUIDE, DUE IN APRIL. PRICE: N/C = £6.95 S/C = £4.95

THOUSANDS OF BACK ISSUES, COMICS MAGAZINES, FILM MAGS, PORTFOLIOS AVAILABLE, SEND S.A.E. FOR FULL LIST.

X-MEN 112, 114 85P 119, 120 80P, 123-129 65P 130 80P, 131-140 50P 137 £2 ANN 4 75P (56, £4.50, 57-63, 65 £4 ALL ADAMS)
AVENGERS 183 £1.25, 200 £1 ANN 7 £2.75
CONAN 7, 8, 9, 10 (SMITH) £9 37, ADAMS £2.75
DEFENDERS 1 £12.50 2, £5.50 8, 10 £2.95
M. FEATURES (OLD) 1 £9 2 £4.50 3, £3.75
SWAMP THING 1 £4.95, 2-4 £2.95 5-8 £1.25
TEEN TITANS 1 35P 2 OF 25P KAZAR 1 30P
DAZZLER 1, 40P 2 OF 30P NOVA 25 90P

E.C. LIBRARY: TWO FISTED TALES 4 VOLS IN CASE
£40 EACH WEIRD SCIENCE 4 VOLS IN CASE
INC. POST + PACK. WEIRD FANTASY 4 VOLS IN CASE

A LOOK BACK: WRIGHTSON SUPERB HARDCOVER GLOSSY DELUXE BOOK COVERING HIS WHOLE CAREER £36 INC. P.P.
ELRIC PORTFOLIO SIGNED: FRANK BRUNNER £16 INC.P.

COMIC BAGS ULTRAVIOLET TREATED. £1.95/100 INC POST.
MAG BAGS £2.25/100 INC POST.
2000AD SIZE £2.50/100 INC POST.
SORRY ABOUT THE INCREASE IN PRICE ON THESE BUT THE E.R.O. POSTAL RATES ARE TO BLAME. THEY CAN BE OBTAINED MUCH CHEAPER FROM OUR STALL AT ALL COMIC MARKETS.

YESTERDAY'S LILY by Jeffrey Jones
published by Dragon's Dream; £3.95

First of all, let me dispense with any pretense of objectivity by admitting that Jeff Jones is perhaps my all-time favourite artist. I rate his paintings, and the comic strips dating from the early part of his career, very highly indeed. It's true that his canvases are occasionally marred by a rather garish use of colour, but in terms of composition and general execution they can seldom be faulted.

Jones' inspiration appears to stem from some intensely private inner source. His style is at once economical and sophisticated. When it comes to drawing the human form he has few peers. His figures are all marvellously sleek and sensuous-looking. They have noble, vaguely Patrician faces, with large, heavy-lidded eyes and full, petulant, downturned mouths.

In the past, Jones work has appeared on the covers of numerous paperbacks and in journals as diverse as 'National Lampoon', 'Swank', 'Vampirella' and 'Phase'. More recently it has been anthologised in two excellent books: 'Idyl' and 'The Studio'. Now a third volume of his paintings and drawings has been released by Dragon's Dream. It's called 'Yesterday's Lily', and I have a copy beside me as I type these words. Needless to say, I think it's pretty good. In addition to three short comic strips ('Luca', 'The Bridge', and 'Spirit of '76', all of which first appeared in 'Spasm' and were later reprinted in 'Les Bandes Dessinées de Jeff Jones'), it also contains around fifty full-colour paintings and numerous sketches & working drawings. The end result is a fascinating glimpse of the world as seen through the distorting lens of Jones' own personal vision. Perhaps inevitably some of the imagery is a little unoriginal (warriors, wizards, beautiful women and so on), but it is redeemed from outright banality by the strength and clarity of the technique.

Trying to describe a book of paintings in a few sentences is a futile exercise--especially when the paintings are as good as these. Instead of wasting words, I'll limit myself to saying that, in my view, Jeff Jones is a uniquely gifted artist. 'Yesterday's Lily' offers further proof of his worth. It demands to be seen.

-Pete Scott

THE SCIENCE FICTION AND
FANTASY WORLD OF TIM WHITE
New English Library; £9.95

Like Chris Foss and Peter Jones before him, Tim White is of the new breed of sf artist, his roots planted firmly in the world of sf book covers rather than the traditional but now virtually extinct British Science Fiction Magazine. The majority of the work included in this collection was produced during his 6-year tenure with NEL's paperback division.

But despite the publishers' claims that Tim White's art is the greatest innovation since disposable toilet paper, the hype is simply not backed up by the work selected. When he is good, White is very, very good; for the rest of the time he hovers between adequacy and mediocrity.

Still, there are several striking pieces in evidence -- particularly his illustrations for the Bester anthology THE LIGHT FANTASTIC (used as the cover for this book) and Silverberg's DYING INSIDE. Much of the remainder is at best unmemorable.

I can understand White's desire to produce an sf collection before the market disappears altogether (which I fear it may have done already), but to do so at such an early point in his career and with so limited a selection to choose from was to invite failure, and he has not been disappointed.

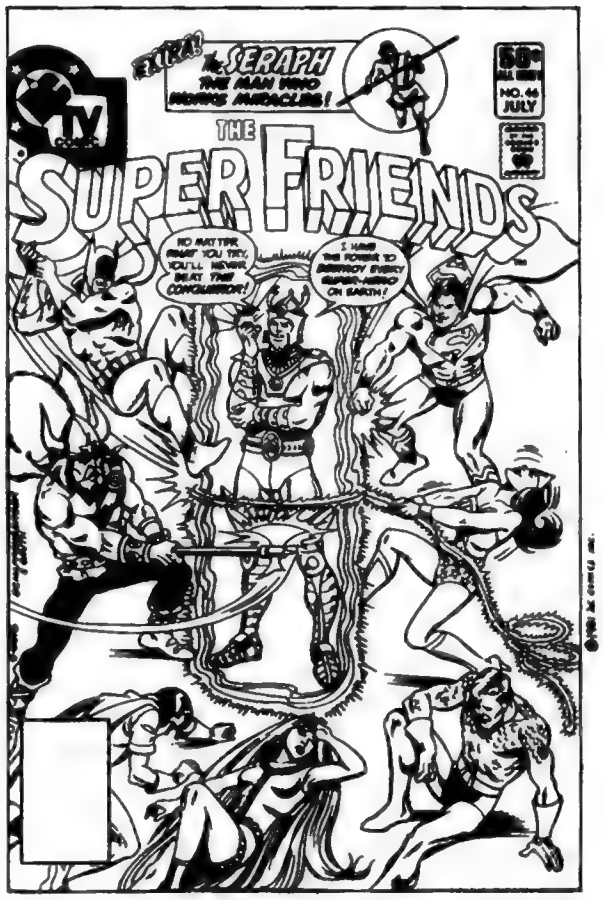
-Steven J. Green

Katholicity

I warn you now, this item is going to be hopelessly biased. It is also going to confound some individuals who claim I am over-given to destructive criticism. Because I am writing to give one tribute at least to a man who, in my opinion, doesn't get his fair share of the fandom kudos -- E. Nelson Bridwell.

What I like about Mr Bridwell can be summed up in three parts. Firstly, his continuity. In this area, he never makes mistakes -- and he even cleans up other people's mistakes for them. Witness his providing logical and convincing origins for those silly products of the television, Wendy and Marvin of the original Super Friends storyline, to the point where the reader finds the whole premise, absurd as it was before Bridwell got hold of it, is after all possible, or at least plausible. This also serves as an example of another pleasing thing about Bridwell's adherence to continuity--namely, even though he is writing an obviously juvenile book, he has enough respect for his readers to assume they're capable of spotting logical fallacies, and that they appreciate consistency of character and plot. Too many writers hold the attitude that the bulk of their readership, being children, won't notice or care if there are gaping holes in the plot. This is a very patronising and belittling attitude, and one founded on a very mistaken idea, because an intelligent child has nearly as much capacity for logic, and usually a better memory than an intelligent adult. Bridwell is never guilty of this sin.

Then there's his accuracy. His knowledge of mythology and of the kind of adventure fiction which isn't perhaps great literature, but has what andy offutt has beautifully defined as 'the magic', is encyclopaedic, and his grasp of history excellent. It is again a measure of his respect for his readers that he does not give them dollops of wholly spurious history or mythology or literature. Of necessity, he can't tell it exactly like it was--he has to get his own characters in, and very often he is gently sending the whole situation up -- but he always remains true to the spirit of whatever original he is using. I have said before, and it still holds true, that he got more authentic Norse mythology into one issue of Inferior 5 than has appeared in the whole run of Thor. Likewise, in the same book he introduced surrogates of Tarzan and The Scarlet Pimpernel, and while they were obviously played for comedy I don't think there was anything in the basics of the characters that would have offended Edgar Rice Burroughs or Baroness Orczy. To take a more recent example which has a very handy comparison readily available, look at the origin of Jack O'Lantern. A back-up strip in a juvenile book, but Bridwell takes the trouble to find out--if he didn't know already -- about the different kinds of the Irish "Little People", and I suspect he may also have had something to do with the accuracy with which they were drawn. When Chris Claremont introduced the Irish supernatural in The X-Men, he got no further than Irish = leprechauns, and he quite certainly didn't bother about the inaccurate, Disneyfied way they were drawn. (No, I malign Disney. The X-Men "leprechauns" were drawn pretty like the "gnomes" in "The Gnomobile", but when the Disney studios actually tried leprechauns in "Darby O'Gill and the Little People" they did pretty well at it.) It seems a shame



in many ways that the sloppy, slapdash writer gets the awards and the writer who cares doesn't. Incidentally, Bridwell makes a better job than anyone else at transcribing dialect, too.

Lastly, and most importantly, there is Bridwell's charm and humour. His creations are always delightful -- and pure entertainment. He may not go in much for heavy 'realism' and complicated subplots, but what are those things in comparison to the happy imagination that can devise the Green Fury's method of travel? Indeed, all the International Heroes are interesting and amusing, and I hope we will be favoured with all their origin stories in due course. Just going on the ones we do know, their first, getting-to-know-you, meeting as a team is potentially hilarious. "You got your powers from where, Mr O'Lantern? From the fairies. Yes. I thought I hadn't heard you right the first time. And you, Seraph? From God. I see." Even though SUPER FRIENDS has been cancelled, I'm sure Mr Bridwell won't let these heroes go to waste.

I said this was going to be a hopelessly biased item. I have after all been in love with E. Nelson Bridwell ever since I was 12 and read my first Inferior 5. Which is a long time now.

Speaking of the Banshee's (for the sake of clarity, since the new Banshee has now been introduced, by Banshee I mean Sean Cassidy) leprechaun reservation, does anyone realise that, as Linus says, the theological implications alone are staggering? Before that story, I always assumed that the Banshee was probably Catholic, possibly Church of Ireland. But after, the question was--why was his family chosen, and prepared, to house a leprechaun colony? Between the Little People and the Church there was no love lost. The Little People, who were physically immortal, though they could be killed, and had no souls, regarded the Church with at best neutrality, at worst fear & hostility. The Church was downright hostile to the Little People. Would a good Christian family offer to share their home with the Church's unfriends? Then there is the Banshee's habit of saying "Sirens be praised!" Sirens? And even his frequent "Holy Mother!" and "Mother of God!" could as easily refer to the Great Goddess as to the Virgin Mary. No, there is only one reasonable conclusion -- Sean Cassidy is a pagan. Now, if he was to meet up with Thor...

-KATHLEEN GLANCY

Fan-Things

Some people are kind enough to call this a "review column", but, in the space available, to give a full review of every item that gets sent in just isn't possible. All I can do is try to tell you enough to help you decide what you went to investigate further, and also let you know what's on the way. The alternative would be to take three or four items, and do in-depth reviews; that would mean ignoring a lot of good material, and also go against the general Bem policy of trying to act as a communication centre for/gateway into comics fandom.

DAILY STRIPS ≠7 is the latest strip reprint volume from The Newspaper Strip Society; in 20 high-quality A4 pages you'll find a Frank Bellamy, John Allard & Jim Edgar Garth story, "The Doomsmen", reprinted. It runs to a total of 90 strips, and looks very nice indeed. £1 should get you a copy (from John Dakin, London), or $5 in America--or if you're a Colin Campbell customer, you should find it on his lists, as he acted as co-publisher of this issue.

If John's got any left, he'll probably put in a copy of THE NEWSPAPER STRIP SOCIETY NEWSLETTER ≠4 (7 A4 pages) too, which has lots of news about strips, background, and other items of interest, including some "Paddy Kool" strips written by John and drawn by Harry McAvinchey, plus "Oh Aphrodite" and more. It reveals that DAILY STRIPS ≠8 will be either a Martin Asbury Garth adventure, "Mr Rubio Calls", or a Jeff Hawke story. Whatever, to reserve it send John £1, or $5.

One item of interest at the latest Comicbook Marketplace was the mysterious appearance of a little pink freesheet saying "With the fan in mind" - "Comicon '81 is coming!" - "Stay Tuned!" All intriguing stuff, and I wish the organizers good luck. But the fact that they are using the term "Comicon" without getting permission isn't a very good start...

BEYOND THE WHITE GATES ≠2 (40 A4 stencilled pages for 40p by post from Mat Coward, London) is a good thick read, featuring the almost legendary Alan Austin on sex, hypocrisy and "Caligula", Pete Scott on Richard Strange, Ian Williams on SF and fantasy books, Mat Coward on radio, and a Bem-length lettercol, complete with Glancy, Scott, Domar, Russell, Gryc, Haden...and Nigel "Graffiti" Rees? Only three pages are devoted to the death of John Lennon, and where the writer was when he heard the sad news, which compares favourably with a lot of American fanzines. A pleasant, thoughtful fanzine.

SPEAKEASY ≠16 (30p by post for 12 A4 pages --plus Royal Wedding souvenir pull-out--from Izzak, London) contains a comprehensive news service (even if the DC page is just the DC "Coming Attractions" leaflet cut up and pasted down), an account of Richard Ashford's attempt to break into comics in America, and the 4-page second half of an interview, done at the time of the Marvelcon, with Archie Goodwin. It's an interesting piece -- but whoever typed it up know nothing about comics, treating us to such classic names as Steve Engleheart, Alex Tooth, Sal Amedola, Moebious, Rick Marshall, Frank Ferzetta, Eernist Hemmingway, Bernard Krickstein, Al Feildstien, and Harvy Kurtzman. Sloppiness like that is rather distracting, and gives the impression that nobody cares what "the world's greatest comic FANzine", as they modestly call it, contains.

From the same address (with 18 A4 peges for 30p) comes UNDIGESTED HORROR ≠1, a stripzine with contributions by Steven Martin, Barry Winetrobe & Tim Geeves, and others without legible signatures, at least on my copy. The story that Barry Winetrobe wrote has at least got a reasonable and consistent plot; the others are perhaps warming-up exercises for better things to come.

To help to keep up with its 12-a-year schedule, occasional issues of SPEAKEASY are partial reprints of THE AUSTRALIAN COMIC COLLECTOR; the print quality isn't too hot, but it's a nice bit of international collaboration, and gets Speakeasy out of its rut for a month. A four-issue subscription is £1, or £2 is enough for ten issues. Whether or not cheques should be made payable to "The Izzak" I don't know...

John Green has kindly supplied a copy of SAGA ≠1, as mentioned last time; the cover price is 25p (for 32 unreduced A5 pages, from Alan Pinder, Glasgow), to which I suggest you add postage to taste. Alan contributes articles on different types of comic artwork, and also on how some films rip-off the concepts of earlier ones; he also wrote two sf stories, while Martin Walport contributes a 4-page strip, "The Origin of Mighty Myk", and a short report on comic shops in Glasgow and Edinburgh. There's some nice SF-type art, much of it taken direct from the pencils, and all in all it's a promising start from a relatively young group of fans. The Glasgow shop they mention is in Allison Street, run by Paul Abrahms --it's mainly a book exchange shop, but has lots of Marvel and DC comics old and new. If you don't see what you're looking for, ask, as there isn't room to have all their stock on display.

You'll have seen the ad for Ed Lux's NATIONAL INVERTED on page 36; it's a single A2 (23½ x 16½") sheet folded down to A5, designed as 8 A5 and 4 A4 pages, and covered with a wide variety of strips and other visuals. I kind of liked it, & even dissolved into helpless laughter a couple of times...so find out if your sense of humour is as warped as mine, why don't you.

Talking of ads, the ACE mailing to start the new volume (see page 35) is now out.

And how about STICKY THIGH COMICS ≠1 (25p by post for 16 glossy A5 pages from Martin Longley, West Midlands) -- I mean, anything edited by a Martin L has got to be super-spiffing, right? You may well remember "Ultra Man" from Bem last year; if so you're familiar with the Longley brand of imagination, and the report of a 10-page Longley strip here will shift your wallet out of neutral. There's a photo of Mr Longley in his bath (3 or 4 years ago, I'd say), a snappy editorial, a problem page, and an invitation to other artists to join in. Issue 2 will be HOT GROIN COMICS, followed by PNEUMATIC DILDO FIXATION COMICS --aren't you glad you can buy them by post, rather than ask for them over the counter? A good slice of rock/roll weirdness, well worth the money involved, I'd say.

I don't usually mention the main American fanzines; however, having the March (≠189) THE COMIC READER to hand, I want to make two points. Firstly, it's a special issue to celebrate forty years of Captain America; secondly, as well as all the news coverage, there are features, letters, and columns, and 18 pages of newspaper strips, including The Seekers, Paul Temple, and 8 days of vintage 1945 Superman. Some other American zines may be slicker--but TCR has a special place in my heart. Investigate it yourself, next time you see a copy.

3510 (25p + 11½p stamp for 28 A5 pages, from Jeremy Cunningham, West Sussex) is a stripzine inspired by "Atlantis" by Angel Witch and "The Deep Range" by Arthur C. Clarke; the 25-page strip tells of 3510's attempts to catch a "cambian fish" in the oceans of Earth. The "fish" is more of a sea serpent, and there's a submarine after it too...a well-told, exciting story with functional art, it's well worth the money; I don't like to be a killjoy, but the only offputting thing is some of the spelling.

RABBITS TEND TO EXPLODE ≠6 (14 A4 pages, stencilled, from Dave Haden, Shottery Stores and P.O., Shottery, Stratford-Upon-Avon, Warwickshire) is mainly poetry, by such people as Steve Sneyd, Andrew Darlington, Jon Dugdale and Mat Coward; add reviews of a few zines & an appreciation of Clifford D. Simak, and you've a rich assortment.

And INDOMITABLE BEETROOT (3 A4 pages for 20p in stamps from John Huscroft, Essex) is a neatly typeset poetry pamphlet, with work by John Huscroft and Pete Jeary. I'm really not enough of a poetry expert to say much, but it seems okay to me!

Kev F. Sutherland (remember Bem-27's "Dez The Knife"?) writes that he's readying a 44-page visual novel for printing in May; it's written by him, with visuals supplied mainly by his good self, although John M. Matthews and Kev Hopgood have also illustrated chapters. The page-size is about 7" by 10", and it'll cost 40p, plus 15p post & packing (from Kev Devon). More next time...oh, the character, and title, is THE HAWK.

John Mould reports that a new, but alas final, issue of WORKIN' KLASS SUPER HERO is likely to appear soon--and George Barnett, editor of PANELOLOGIST, reports that Pan ≠11 will appear; on September 5th, he is getting married. This will benefit Pan, because:

"1) When married, you spend less money and time on your beloved, as she becomes part of the furniture.

"2) My adorable wife-to-be (Lindy Gladwin) is a very talented highspeed shorthand-typist."

What more can I add? Congratulations!

STARLIGHT #3 (40p + 15p p&p from Max O'Connor,
Bristol
for 24 A4 pages) will be out in May, Max tells me; the cover, with extra added colour, is by Don Wazejewski, while there's an article on the criticism of comics (by people who don't read them) by Ian Abrahams, an interview with Colonel Nicholas Fury conducted by Graeme "Mr B" Bassett...and a trio of columns too. Steve Jones (who it seems has discontinued FEATURE ZINE, in favour of a rather slicker project to be seen later this year) examines "Paradox" from the recent Marvel Preview; Steve Noble talks about the X-Men; and the Frank Brunner Dr Strange is Martin Skidale's subject.

Even with only two issues out so far, STARLIGHT is making a good showing in the "Favourite New Fanzine" category of the Fan Achievement Awards; to find out why, reserve your copy of the third issue now!

And if you haven't got a copy of the Fan Achievement Awards second-round (voting) ballot, you can obtain one from the Bem address--

-- for the traditional self addressed, stamped envelope. The deadline for the return of forms is May 30th. If you like the idea of some sort of recognition for fanzine writers and artists and their works, cast your votes here.

The more professional equivalent is the Eagle Awards, of course; keep your eyes open for that ballot paper too, which may be out by the time you read this. It ought to go out with a Bem to Bem subscribers, deadlines permitting -- if you want to make sure of a copy, though, sending a self addressed envelope, complete with stamp, to Bem for the purpose is one way to avoid any problems.

OGRE #8 (25p by post from C. Gould,
Liverpool
) should be out in April; what's inside I don't know, but Colin's sent us a xerox of the front cover, and it's pretty striking. It's by Alan Davis, who, Colin says, "is likely to be having some of his work published on the covers of Marvel UK's 'Super Action' and 'Super Adventure' mags in the next month or so."

The British Fantasy Society's FANTASYCON VII has had a change of venue forced upon it. It'll still be on 10-12 July 1981 in Birmingham -- but at the Centre Hotel. The Guest of Honour is author Peter Tremayne; and Alan Hunter, whose artwork has graced just about every UK fanzine, sf and comics, plus prozines and American zines like ALGOL, is the Special Artist Guest. The registration fee is £1, payable to British Fantasy Conventions and sent to Mike Chinn,

Midlands, B67 7NS. No doubt Mike can supply more information for a mere s.a.e., if you're only half persuaded to part with any hard-earned cash.

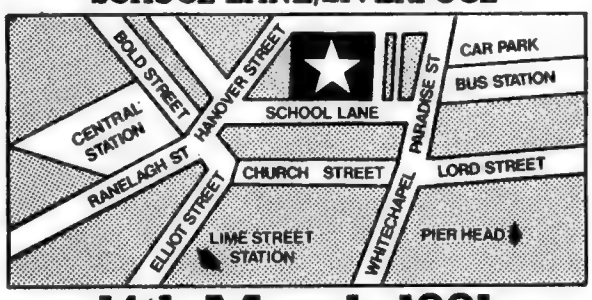
★ ★ ★ ★ BOB SMART PRESENTS THE ★ ★ ★ ★

NORTHWEST COMIC MARTS

Britain's top comic dealers will be selling 1000's of comic books, including the latest Marvel and D.C. imports, E.C., and Golden Age, magazines, portfolios, fanzines, and other related material

LIVERPOOL

BLUECOAT CONCERT HALL
SCHOOL LANE, LIVERPOOL

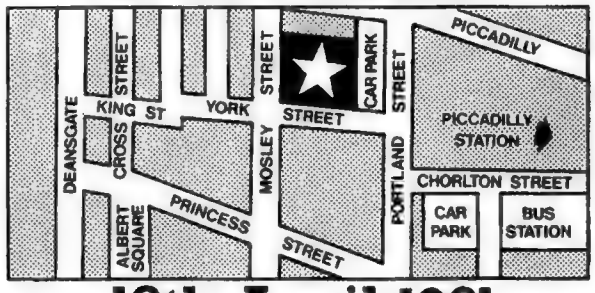


14th March 1981

Future dates
★ 30th May ★ 25th July ★
★ 19th September ★ 5th December ★

MANCHESTER

PICCADILLY PLAZA EXHIBITION HALL
YORK STREET, MANCHESTER



18th April 1981

Future dates
★ 27th June ★ 22nd August ★
★ 7th November ★

Doors open at 12 noon and admission to each venue is only 20p which includes a FREE raffle ticket.

★ ★ ★ (Prize to the value of £5) ★ ★ ★

★ Refreshments available. ★

★ Buses, Trains and Car parks just minutes away. ★

Dealers information available from:

Bob Smart, 8 Sefton Ave., Congleton, Cheshire CW12 3DB
Telephone 026-02 3417

Collectors send a large S.A.E. for this months FREE mailing package including: Supplement, Advance import list, Related items sheet, etc.

Staying in the same general area, Steve Green reports that the Solihull SF Group now meets on the second Friday of each month at 8 pm. The February and March meetings were held at the Mason's Arms, High Street, Solihull (a short walk from the railway station, on a direct line from Birmingham New Street) -- but check with Steve (his address is in Reaction-- s.a.s.e. requested--or phone
in the evenings, or during the day, and ask for him personally) to make sure about April on. It's an "open invitation to anyone looking for a chat and a pint", Steve says, which has to be the best offer I've heard all day...

Gary Millidge
writes that AMON SPEK #5 "is still a way off...I've 'shelved' the quarterly schedule for a number of complex reasons", which he went on to give. He hopes AS #5 will be sent out before <u>too</u> long, though; so, subscribers be patient is the message, I guess.

BICENTENNIAL STAR #1 (90p by post for 60 A4 pages from Alan John Burrows,
Cheshire
) is a good long space adventure strip. A lot of work's gone into it, and seeing how Alan's work becomes more confident as he goes along is most encouraging. There are very few fan artists who could achieve as much as this; in 10 years this could well be a special collectors' item!

AMAZING ALFIE #1 (25p by post from Jon Clark, "The
N. Humberside, for 8 A4 pages) is something completely different, as stripzines go; would you believe the hero is an old lavatory attendant? Not everyone's cup of tea, but nicely done, with some pleasant dashes of humour.

And METAMORPH #1 (45p by post from Lew Stringer,
Warwickshire
) finally arrived, so Lew has been able to discard his kneecap protectors. A cover by Mike McMahon, inside art by Brian Bolland, Dave Gibbons, and others...a Judge Dredd art index plus summaries of ten of his most memorable serials ...Thunderbirds...an interview with Chris Claremont & Steve Englehart...superheroes in the cinema...Leo Baxendale...lots of good reading! -ED SALLIS

NEWS AT BEM

Whoops! Sorry I'm 39 pages late. Page 2 has to be sent to the printer early these days, and it's silly to write the editorial before I know what's actually inside the issue.

Despite going right up to 44 pages this time, there's so much more that ought to be fitted in. To include as much reading as possible, I'm afraid that once again we're a little light on artwork in places, particularly towards the end of our nine pages of letters. We could easily have run to 18 pages of letters; it's a shame to have so much good material that just can't be fitted in...

One thing that we can do is use a slightly smaller type size for the letters page; our new printer is now photographing each page of Bem individually, which should improve the crispness of the finished product, and allow a useful flexibility in the type size.

While Reaction's extra-long this time, Bemuscene is shorter than it usually is; and next time it will be missing entirely, to allow us to catch up on a slight backlog of articles, and even an interview or two that need to see print fairly soon. It's a good time to re-think Bem's review section, which has had its critics. Should fewer comics be reviewed in greater detail? Should we give up the "open door" policy of letting anyone who wants to join in send their reviews to Bem? Are "off-trail" items like the Vaughn Bodé Index useful, or should we stick with our four-colour friends? And which reviewers should be encouraged...?

I'd like to thank Dave Gibbons for taking the time from his very busy schedule to draw Bem's cover this time, and also allow Mike Taylor to interview him for Bem--all good stuff. And of course Mike transcribed the interview, Dave checked it, Mike typed it up...and Mike added the colour separations to the cover, too! All this while putting his own MASTERS OF INFINITY together, and despite typewriter trouble too.

I gather that the typewriter breakdown delayed MoI #7 by a week or two; it should however have come out a couple of weeks before this Bem, complete with Mike McMahon cover and interview, and 2½ pages of "The Bem News Service". At the moment I'm not sure whether MoI #8 will be out before Bem #34--but whichever comes first should have the next instalment of news, covers, and so on. Who knows, maybe there'll be more information about SUPERMAN PRESENTS THE EGYPTIAN CHRONICLES, a 3-part mini-series that will be on sale in June, July and August--according to THE COMIC TIMES, alias MEDIA SHOWCASE. Speculating on what would be in such a title can supply hours of harmless amusement; my theory though is that somebody mis-heard "Krypton" over the phone, which is one hazard of trying to run a comics news service.

Anyway, stick around. It looks as if Bem #34 will feature a cover illustration by Brian Bolland, a two-page interview with Kurt Schaffenberger, an article on Cerebus the Aardvark, Graeme Bassett on spies in comics, and perhaps the next instalment of "Made In Britain", spotlighting one of the longest Judge Dredd stories yet. And the fear-fraught finale of the current H.M.S. Conqueror serial, too, which goes by the title of "The Big Gamble", with 5 pages of Dave Harwood's best artwork yet.

All this, and Thundermole too? We must be doing something, right? -Martin

ART CREDITS:

Leigh Baulch: 11 (right), 15; Laurence Bowkett: 25; Mark Casto: 36 (strip); Hon Fai Chan: 41; Mike Collins: 24; Ben M. Crozier: 29; Hunt Emerson: 34; Dave Gibbons: 1, 8 (reprinted from STRIPS 80 with permission); Dave Harwood: 17-21; B.J. Martin: 13 (strip); Mike Matthews: 27; Terry M. Moore: 14 (strip); Adrian Salmon: 26; Cameron Smith: 39; Superswipe: 7, 9, 11 (left); Mike Taylor: 1 (colour separations); Colin Wilson: 35.

COMICBOOK MARKETPLACE

Lyndhurst Hall, Warden Road, London, N.W.3.

Saturday May 2nd free

STARTS 12 NOON

The Comicbook Marketplace, not only the place to pick up all those hard to find back issues and latest imports, but also somewhere where you can meet fellow fans and see friends. If you hate marts that are vast and impersonal then the Marketplace is for you.

Come along to the Comicbook Marketplace on May 2nd, we'll have nearly forty tables packed with more than 100,000 comicbooks, black & white and colour magazines, fanzines, art portfolios, and many other comics related items from Britain's top comics dealers.

HOW TO GET THERE Underground: Chalk Farm, Camden Town, or Kentish Town. Bus: 3, 29, 31, 53, 74, 253 to Camden Town. 27, 134, 137, 214 to Kentish Town Road. 24, 46, 68 to Prince of Wales Road.

COMICBOOK MARKETPLACE DATES FOR 1981

July 25th. Further dates will be announced shortly. All dates and venue subject to change.

VISIT THE

FANTASY DOMAIN

TABLES AT THE LONDON COMIC MARTS AND COMICBOOK MARKETPLACES

WE SPECIALIZE IN:

NON DISTRIBUTED MARVEL COMICS (INCLUDING FEB/MAR. 81 TITLES)
RARE D.C. COMICS FROM THE 70'S
EARLY MARVEL BLACK AND WHITE MAGAZINES
NON DISTRIBUTED MARVEL AND D.C. TREASURIES
WARREN MAGAZINES. SPIRITS. FAMOUS MONSTERS ETC.
OUT OF PRINT STARLOGS AT LOW PRICES
HOWARD THE DUCK COMICS AND MAGAZINES
STRANGE TALES FEATURING STERANKO'S S.H.I.E.L.D.
EARLY DR. STRANGE COMICS
AMERICAN GUM CARD SETS (ALIEN. EMPIRE STRIKES BACK. CE3K ETC.)

SOME PRODUCTS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE:

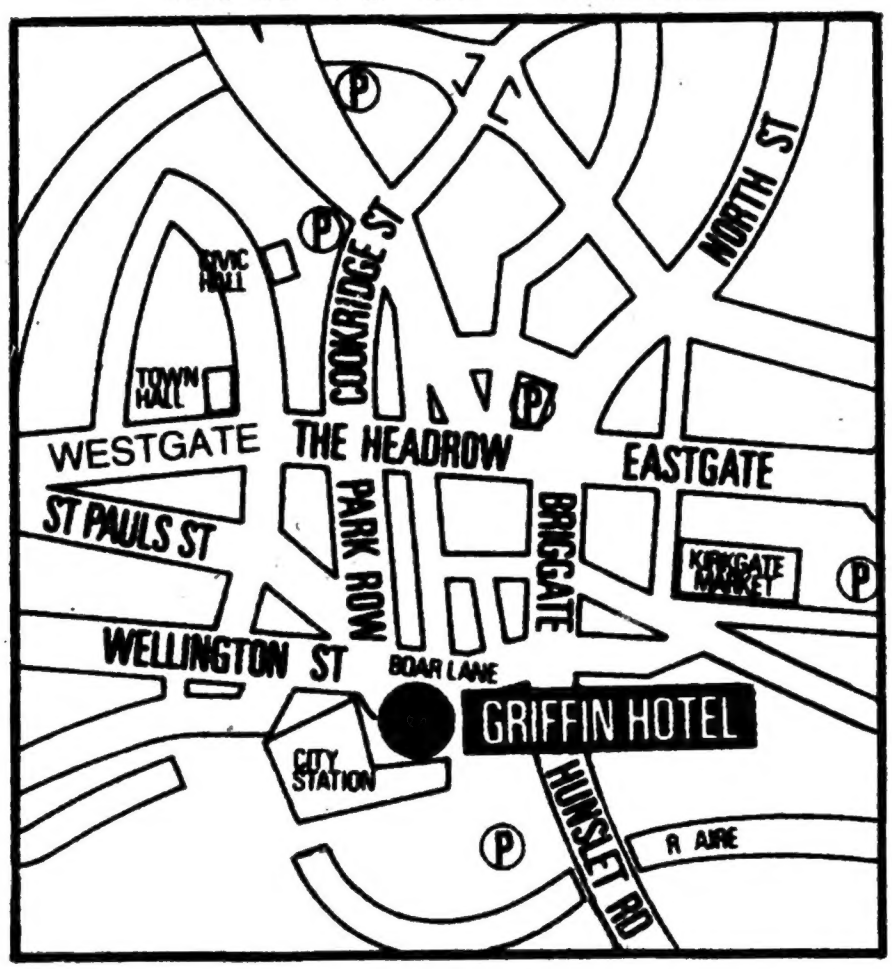
AVENGERS 200 75p TEAM-UP 100 60p THOR 300 75p
FLASH GORDON MOVIE ADAPTATION BY AL WILLIAMSON & COMIC SET 75p
WORLD OF KRYTON & COMIC SET 95p
X-MEN 137 95p 142 95p 143 60p ANNUAL 3 £1-25
SPIDERMAN/HULK NEWSPAPER PREMIUM #1 £1-50 #2 40p
SUPERMAN VS MOHAMMAD ALI TREASURY £1-50
ALIEN GUM CARD SET £4 ALIEN WARREN SPECIAL £1-50
EMPIRE STRIKES BACK GUM CARD SETS #'S 1, 2, £6 #3 £5
BUCK ROGERS GUM CARD SET £5
ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW CARD SET £2-50

ALL THE ABOVE ITEMS PLUS MUCH, MUCH MORE AVAILABLE ONLY FROM OUR TABLES AT LONDON MARTS: SORRY, NO MAIL ORDER.

LEEDS COMIC MART

AT THE GRIFFIN HOTEL, BOAR LANE, LEEDS ON SATURDAY, MAY 2nd, 1981

HOW TO GET THERE



THE COMIC MART IS HELD ON THE GROUND FLOOR OF THE GRIFFIN HOTEL WHICH IS FOUND RIGHT IN THE CENTRE OF LEEDS, NEXT TO THE MAINLINE CITY RAILWAY STATION AND CLOSE TO CAR PARKS AND BUS STATIONS.

YOU'LL FIND BRITAIN'S TOP DEALERS AT THE NEW LEEDS COMIC MART, SELLING THOUSANDS OF COMIC BOOKS — BACK ISSUES, NEW IMPORTS, MARVEL, D.C., ETC. — FILM MAGAZINES, POSTERS, ART PORTFOLIOS, FANZINES AND ALL KINDS OF SCIENCE FICTION/FANTASY MATERIAL!

NEXT MARTS:

JULY 18th, 1981
OCTOBER 24th, 1981

DEALERS:

SEND AN S.A.E. FOR INFORMATION TO:—
GOLDEN ORBIT.

THIS IS A DIGITAL FACIMILE OF THE ORIGINAL FANZINE.
COPYRIGHT REMAINS WITH THE ORIGINAL ARTISTS,
AUTHORS, COMPANIES AND PUBLISHERS.
NOT FOR RESALE OR INCLUSION IN ANY
COMMERCIAL VENTURE

ADMISSION FREE — OPENS AT NOON

sigh...

PART ONE

Hey, y'know I said last col that I was against the return of Ka-Zar in his own title because, quote, "he's dead boring" and an "arrogant creep", &c? Er, well... I said that before seeing Ka-Z (3rd series) #1 of course (despite my tendency to preach to others about not prejudging things...), and having since seen Ka-Zar #1, I find myself somewhat flummoxed.

I mean, there he isn't, seemingly, boring/arrogant/obnoxious, &c, or not to anything like the degree I'd been used to... This is annoying.

Okay, so it's nice that he's no longer like that. This is A Good Thing, no? No.

It goes back to what I was on about a couple of cols back, regarding consistency of characterisation, and a comic-book character's 'right' not to be altered beyond recognition. This character just ain't Ka-Zar, f'pete's sake...

I mean, okay, characters can 'develop', sure; in fact they bloody ought to, if comics have any merit. But when, how, where did the Ka-Zar I used to know and scorn develop into this? And if there is a logical, acceptable explanation, will we be privileged to receive it?

I'm just asking...

Meantime, I have to reluctantly admit that I find the new Ka-Zar quite interesting. (I hate being forced to contradict myself in print. Just don't let it happen again, hear? If Dazzler is suddenly turned into something bearable, I may retire to a monastery...)

PART TWO

Right, well I guess I ought to devote a bit of time and space to replying to Christopher Melchert's remarks re my "Looking Back" piece from Bem-31. I didn't really want to go back over that... I'd rather go forward. However, I figure I ought to try and answer the points that he raised.

1) The FF's 'unoriginal powers': I'd come across elasticity in not only Plastic Man (don't ask me where I'd encountered PM, 'cause I frankly couldn't tell you--I seem to recall it was in a hardback annual-type book -- but I had), but also Elastic Lad (Jimmy Olsen) and Elongated Man; invisibility I'd come upon even before Invisible Kid of the LSH; the brute (super-)strength of the Thing needs no comment (and his appearance was just a carry-over from the Marvel monster mags); and although I hadn't heard of the original Human Torch, I'd seen many heroes & villains with natural (?) heat powers. Fair enough? By contrast, I hadn't come across anything quite like Green Lantern.

2) Unlike you, CM, I wasn't 'put off' (exactly) by the strangeness of the art (or even story) compared to DC. Thinking back as best I can, I'd say my attitude was that it was a 'valid' (not that I'd have been able to phrase it that way at the time) but not preferable alternative.

3) Ely & Baily were if anything even more pedestrian than Elias, so I doubt if you'd disagree with my remarks there. As for the ones I gave as 'good' artists: Swan you agree with -- fine, no problem; Anderson I always liked...chalk it up to my 'bad taste', okay? (But have you seen his Spectre work?); Heath, as Martin remarked, drew other things besides war comics, the which I only started looking at seriously later...which is why I didn't mention Kubert there in fact--not because I don't rate him up there, I do...but because I didn't notice his work at that time. (Incidentally, a name I ought to have included in that section Jim Mooney --that was a serious omission, in my estimation.) And yes, my 'bad taste' is responsible for the omission of Carmine Infantino's name: I wasn't tremendously keen on his stuff back then, and I don't care for it at all now. Sorry, but there's nothing you can do about it.

4) "Why ignore Kirby?" Well, 'cause my attitude to Kirby's work was somewhat ambivalent back then, mainly. Yes I liked the 'dynamism' element of it; but I found it a bit, well, crude. Probably as much due to the rotten inkers he got stuck with then as anything--but I didn't understand such technicalities as 'inking' in those days.

5) Oh, be as rude as you like, fella, but don't go extrapolating so much. My tastes have changed over the years--'broadened' if you will--but I keep certain fundamental criteria, because I see them as fundamental. (If it'll leave you any the wiser, let me say that I first liked Gil Kane's work, then went off it, then reverted to liking it again, then became indifferent, and so on. That I first disliked Wayne Boring's stuff, then mellowed towards it, then hardened again. Does that get us anywhere?)

6) To the list of mags that Martin cited as having continuity in the early 60s I'd like to add Adventure, JLA, and the Doom Patrol (and possibly one or two others, but I'd want to refresh my memory first). 'Zat enough to be going on with?

7) I know 'continuity' means more than continued stories--that's why I referred to "continuity and continued stories", right? But whereas I wouldn't dispute your criticisms of Flash for a moment, I wasn't planning to nominate Flash as an example of continuity. I did say 'various' DC mags, not all. And you're on shaky ground if you're suggesting that all Marvel comics in the early days had working continuity. That Marvel gradually came to (at least try to) make 'continuity' standard practise, and that this prompted DC to do likewise, I would accept. What I was disputing is the peculiar, but frequently asserted, idea that Marvel somehow 'invented' the concept back then -- which wasn't so.

8) Likewise I don't dispute that Marvel went in for 'characterisation' in a big way, and again prompted DC to follow suit. But DC had characterisation in a real sense; their characters--by and large, and I can quote exceptions probably better than you can -- were individuals, with particular characteristics. With some authors & books, such as Kanigher and his works, these characteristics were constantly being thrust under the reader's nose --Sea Devils is probably a good example here--while with other writers and other books, said characteristics were just referred to in passing or shown through the action...especially in the shorter stories. Speaking of which:

9) The point about the '3 x 8-page short stories' format, and similar, was that it was what whichever 'powers-that-be' that decided such matters believed that their public wanted. (A hangover, presumably, from the days when the mags had higher page counts and had room for several features.) It wasn't, so far as I could tell, a simply editorial (let alone authorial) decision; it seemed, to me at any rate, that longer stories were gradually allowed to the writers, editors & artists, who then proceeded to take advantage of the improved opportunities. Stan Lee at Marvel was fortunate enough to have by contrast virtual free rein--yet even he, I might point out, didn't start off with full-length stories.

10) Let's get this straight: you accuse me of misunderstanding 'characterisation' CM? Having 'personal enemies', quite aside from not being in any way original--most heroes having had at least one 'personal' enemy, since way back when (Luthor, Sivana, Hector Hammond -- and a host of foes who've sought out Batman, for one reason or another...)--has, so far as I can see, little or nothing to do with characterisation; it's a simple plot device. (Sometimes the heroes would go to the villains, other times the villains would come to the heroes; one has to ring the changes.) And villains have certainly attacked DC heroes in civilian identities, and their friends and relations, often enough. (I think all Supes', Bats', and GL's friends, relations, and colleagues have been targets at one time or another.) There's nothing revolutionary there (plot device #3, sub-section a-d), even if it were a facet of characterisation.

11) So "every time Spider-Man tackled a villain it was to make up for not having tackled the crook who was to shoot his uncle"? Well, every time Batman tackled a villain it was to avenge the killing of his parents by a crook. He also looked upon it as a civic duty, just as Spidey also looked upon it as a civic duty. And if Flash became a super-hero because he was a fan of same in his youth, and Superman because his foster parents had instilled in him the idea that, as it was later put elsewhere, "with great power comes great responsibility", are these any less 'characterisation'? Just because the text and dialogue might not have kept re-stating the reasons people acted as they did, didn't mean the reasons didn't exist. No doubt DC writers didn't (for the most part) emphasize enough for the benefit of new/casual readers the whys & wherefores--they took it for granted that readers would be familiar with them, I suppose. But in any case, you could see from the actions and attitudes the basic characters of the heroes -- that was good enough for me. It wasn't good enough for Marvel, who obviously felt that everything needed to be explained, and constantly. Well, I dunno--maybe they were right and I was wrong, but, like I say, I found sufficient characterisation conveyed in the DC way. (So sue me already...)

Y'know, CM, I don't hold any great enmity towards Marvel; I've enjoyed the bulk of their product over the years -- even where I thought it was *crap* on the poor side...just as the same goes for DC. I can put up with poor quality (in art or writing or format or whatever), if the finished product is enjoyable -- and provided it doesn't happen to latch on to one of my pet hates, natch. But what I won't put up with, given the choice, is unfairness...'injustice', if you want to be grand about it. And something I've always considered unfair/unjust down the years has been this 'Marvelite' propaganda that Marvel 'invented' such things as continuity, characterisation, &c, back in the sixties. This is unfair to DC and to other companies of earlier times, who merely did things in a different way. As a fan of DC from before Marvel as such came to be, I was simply trying to set the record straight. I should have learnt by now that there's nothing 'simple' about that.

I don't suppose for a moment that that will be the end of it; but it would be nice if we could move on to more current concerns. I know, I know, it's my fault for bringing it all up in the first place. Last time I try and whip up a 'fill-in', I tell you...

PS: If anyone really wants to know, I'm now 29 years of age--gasp! "Own up if you are over 25..." I don't get expelled from fandom when I reach 30, do I? -K. WILLIAMS

19f SPITAL ROAD,
MALDON,
ESSEX, ENGLAND
Tel 0621 56628

NEW COMICS
NEW PAPERBACKS
NEW SPECIALIST PRESS
NEW MAGAZINES
at up to

25% Retail Discount
45% Wholesale Discount

Comprehensive, efficient, fast friendly service
by air from the USA

Product lists and newsletter compiled and mailed monthly

Wholesale and retail customers welcomed: European Service a speciality

Back issues, Dealers stock and other magazine lists issued 2/3 times per year

For your free copy of the current monthly list/newsletter
send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to:-

Dangerous Visions

FANTASY BOOK & COMIC DISTRIBUTORS
19F SPITAL ROAD, MALDON, ESSEX, ENGLAND.

The Specialists in mail order fantasy with a decade of experience and service
to Fandom in over twenty countries worldwide

(overseas customers please send your name and address with 2 International Reply Coupons)

All postage charged at cost: All parcels securely wrapped in cardboard.

NEW COMICS .... NEW PAPERBACKS .... NEW MAGAZINES .... NEW SPECIALIST PRESS

Co. Reg No.2445194 VAT No.312 4756 76